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THE MODERN SENSIBILITY AT THE FOGG ART MUSEUM

John Coolidge

Interviewed by Richard Cándida Smith

Art History Oral Documentation Project

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and the

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John Coolidge (right) with Fogg Art Museum director emeritus Edward Forbes at Rembrandt exhibition opening, April 1960. Photograph courtesy of John Coolidge.



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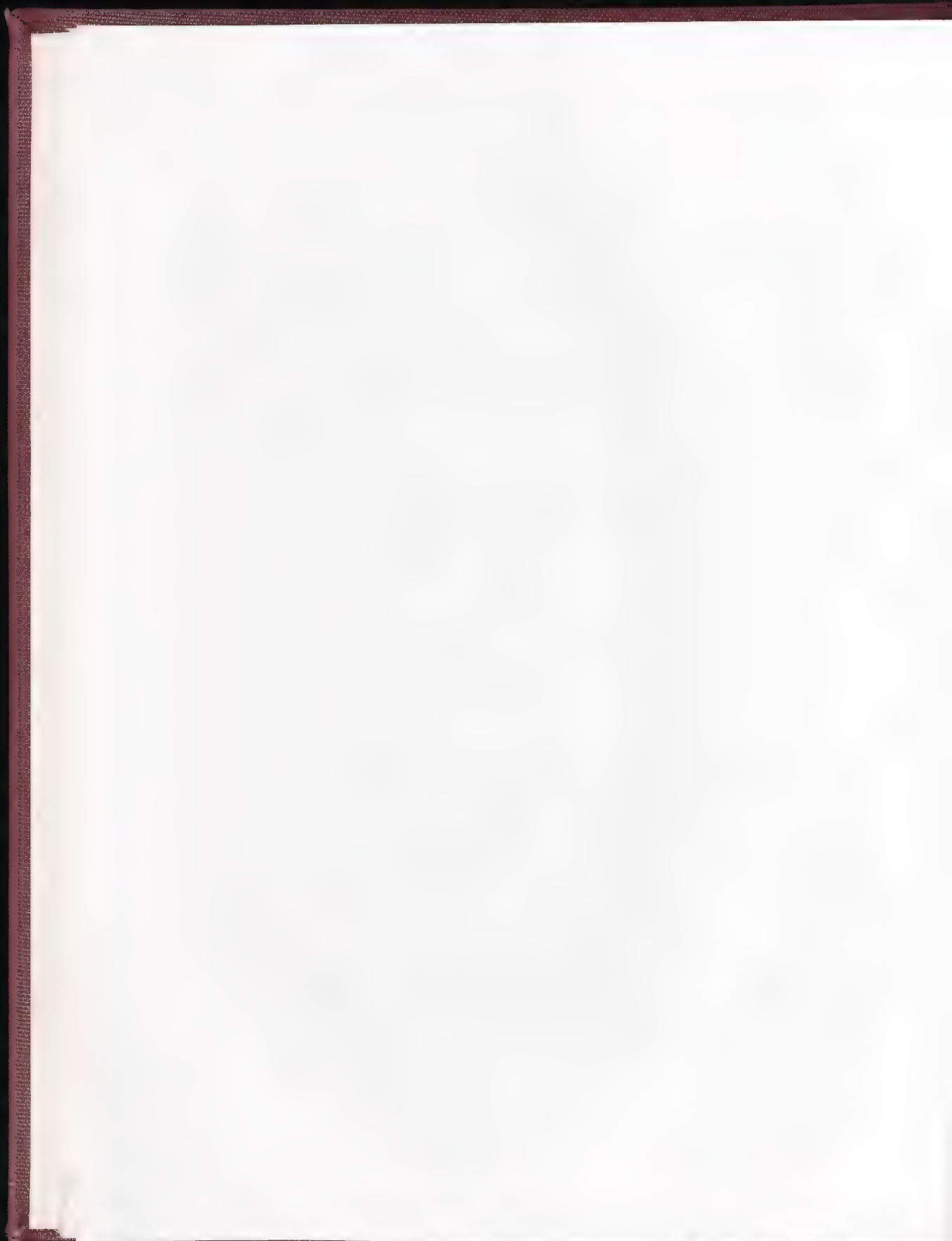
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BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

PERSONAL HISTORY:

Born: December 16, 1913, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Education: B.A., Fine Arts, Harvard University; M.A., Ph.D., Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.

Spouse: Polly Welch Coolidge, married 1936, one child.

CAREER HISTORY:

Lecturer, art history, Vassar College, 1938-39.

Assistant professor, art history, University of Pennsylvania, 1946-47.

Professor, fine arts, Harvard University, 1947-84;
professor emeritus 1984-present.

Director, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, 1948-68.

AFFILIATIONS:

College Art Association of America.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, trustee, 1948-77;
president of the board, 1976-77; emeritus president of
the board, 1977-present.

Society of Architectural Historians, founding member,
first vice president.

BOOKS:

Mill and Mansion: A Study of Architecture and Society
in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1820-1865. New York:
Columbia University Press, 1942.

The Architecture of Art Museums. Austin: University
of Texas Press, 1988.

Patrons and Architects: Designing Art Museums in the
Twentieth Century. Fort Worth, Texas: Amon Carter
Museum, 1989.



INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER:

Richard Cándida Smith, Principal Editor, UCLA Oral History Program. B.A., Theater Arts, University of California, Los Angeles; M.A., Ph.D., United States History, University of California, Los Angeles.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Coolidge's home, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Dates, length of sessions: April 8, 1991 (180 minutes); April 9, 1991 (122); April 10, 1991 (180); April 11, 1991 (240); April 12, 1991 (102).

Total number of recorded hours: 13.75

Persons present during interview: Coolidge and Smith.

CONDUCT OF INTERVIEW:

This is one in a series of interviews intended to examine the development of art history as a professional discipline and conducted under the joint auspices of the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities and the UCLA Oral History Program.

Smith began his preparation for the interview by reviewing Coolidge's articles and books. He examined publications and memoirs touching on the history of the Fogg Art Museum and the Harvard University Fine Arts Department. He consulted papers deposited at the Widener Library, Harvard University, and at the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. He also examined records relating to the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, in the Department of Special Collections at the Getty Center. Getty Center staff prepared a chronological listing of Harvard Fine Arts faculty, their courses, and their doctoral students. Another source of information for this interview were the proceedings of the 1988 Society of Architectural Historians symposium on architectural history in the United States.

The interview is organized chronologically, beginning with Coolidge's family background, continuing on through his education at Harvard University and New



York University's Institute of Fine Arts, and concluding with his research, teaching, and career as director of the Fogg Art Museum.

EDITING:

Vimala Jayanti, editor, edited the interview. She checked the verbatim transcript of the interview against the original tape recordings, edited for punctuation, paragraphing, and spelling, and verified proper names. Words and phrases inserted by the editor have been bracketed.

Coolidge reviewed the transcript. He verified proper names and made a number of corrections and additions.

Teresa Barnett, senior editor, prepared the table of contents, biographical summary, and interview history. The index was compiled by Janet Shiban, Gold Shield intern, 1992-1993, UCLA Oral History Program.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

The original tape recordings of the interview are in the university archives and are available under the regulations governing the use of permanent noncurrent records of the university. Records relating to the interview are located in the office of the UCLA Oral History Program.

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE

APRIL 8, 1991

SMITH: The first question we usually ask in these kinds of sessions is, when and where you were born?

COOLIDGE: I was born in Cambridge [Massachusetts] in the middle of December of 1913. The curious fact is that my parents could never agree on the day, and they each found an official record supporting their position. So the only thing I have in common with Beethoven is that we were both born December 16 question mark. [laughter]

SMITH: Question mark?

COOLIDGE: It may have been the fifteenth, which is my social birthday. The sixteenth is my legal birthday. That's the way I resolved that conflict. When and where I was born: I was born a quarter of a mile from here, at 27 Fairweather Street, and my parents lived in that house-- They had bought it about 1906. They lived there until my mother [Theresa Reynolds Coolidge] died, with the exception of ten years when my father [Julian Lowell Coolidge] was master of Lowell House at Harvard [University]. Thus, except for thirteen years when I was a graduate student, mostly in New York and Princeton-- also, that includes the three years in the war--I have lived within a quarter of a mile from where I was born



graduate student, and he fundamentally spent his life teaching there.

SMITH: What subject did he teach?

COOLIDGE: He taught mathematics. Father said of himself that the Boston snobs considered him a Harvard professor and the Harvard professorial society considered him a Boston snob. And I think this fact affected me. He was a pleasantly eccentric man in little ways. Mother enjoyed people enormously. It was the days when people dropped in for tea--she had tea every afternoon for her whole life, as far as I can make out. She enjoyed meeting people at Harvard; she loved it being the master's wife at Lowell House. Father, on the other hand, was very reserved. Not in the least hostile, but found it difficult to talk in even the simplest way about himself. He was a good mathematician. His field was geometry, though he wrote a book on probability. He was, I believe, an unusually good teacher, and he certainly was a very successful housemaster. I go into this at some length because the social background influenced my own career. I went to the local school, what was then Buckingham School, and then Shady Hill School.

Then father had a sabbatical, and all the family below sixteen or seventeen went abroad. He spent his



sabbatical in a way that I find rather remarkable. The first semester he lectured on mathematics, it was a course in Italian at the University of Rome. The second semester he lectured giving a course on mathematics at the Sorbonne in French. My oldest sister and my older brother didn't come. He was eight years older than I; he must have been twenty or so at that time. My sisters did go, all except for my oldest sister, and went to lycées, or the Italian counterpart. That did not seem suitable to father for me, so I spent the year when I was twelve to thirteen at a boarding school in England which has since gone out of existence. It was in Sussex. It was Saint Andrew's, East Grinstead.

SMITH: Was that like a typical English prep school?

COOLIDGE: Typical English prep school. I had known when I went there--and was shocked, as all Americans were--that a boarding school would take children at the age of five. When I got there, I found the five-year-old children, whose parents were apt to be stationed in India or the far parts of the empire, were enormously happy. The first thing I learned was that that system, as far as the kids were concerned, worked admirably, and I couldn't see that they missed their parents in any way. In fact they had taken a child at the age of two or three, so



that five was by no means exceptional.

I mentioned father's background because I think fundamental to my career was a feeling of being outside, that academics were practically incompetent and that I had inherited this. In fact, father had been the president of the university that the French and American governments set up immediately after the end of World War I, and he ran that. He served in World War I in Paris as a liaison officer, and then when the war was over, he took on the running of that.

SMITH: Is that the American University in Paris?

COOLIDGE: Could well be. I don't really know the name of the organization. That sounds right to me. It was a huge and official thing. However, I was more aware of his reputation for eccentricity than I was of his skillful administration, and felt myself born to eccentricity. Certainly not a member of the traditional Boston elite.

SMITH: Could you tell me just a little about your mother's background? Was she college educated?

COOLIDGE: Mother's background was in striking contrast. Her father, Dr. John Phillips Reynolds, was the son of a Dr. Edward Reynolds [I], and their first child was Edward Reynolds, who died. And she asked her husband if she



could name her second child after her grandfather, John Phillips, who was the first mayor of Boston. So John Phillips Reynolds was descended from the first mayor. His father [Edward Reynolds I] was a notably distinguished Boston physician. I'm not clear as to what he did.

I do know that on the Civil War memorial in Boston Common, there are a series of reliefs. One relief, I'm told, or I read in a history book, a serious one, contains figures of eminent Bostonians, and my great-grandfather is there representing Boston medicine. John Phillips Reynolds, my grandfather, was a specialist in internal medicine and did the extraordinary thing of taking a sabbatical in middle life, which he spent in Vienna. He came back and introduced hysterectomies to this country. He was the founder and first president of a society in Boston for American physicians dealing with women's diseases. These were, as you know, because of the prevalence of syphilis, much more common and complicated in the nineteenth century than they are today.

His oldest son, my oldest uncle, was Edward Reynolds [II], who was also a physician. Edward Reynolds had a son Edward Reynolds [III], but his second son, George



Reynolds, became a physician. Edward [III], the older brother Edward, was a businessman, business manager. He had a daughter who was a physician, and there is a physician in the next generation. Edward Reynold's [II]'s daughter is roughly my age. There was a physician in middle life, fifties or whatever. You have something like six generations, five, six generations of physicians, and no reason to believe they won't go on. [laughter]

SMITH: Your family background seems to be in the direction of the sciences, or a scientific approach to life. Did you consider going into the sciences as you were growing up?

COOLIDGE: At the age of nine, I knew I was going to be an architect. I can remember having the flu and undertaking to draw the interior of Memorial Hall [Harvard University], which I had never seen, but I knew the exterior well. From that age until one year of graduate study at Columbia [University] architectural school, I knew I was going to be an architect. It was very simple.

My mother's family tended to be rather successful, business people or unusual quasi-professionals. One of her brothers was Paul Reynolds, who was the first-- I



mean, he initiated the profession of business or of literary agent in this country. The others were businessmen on their own. My grandfather--who incidentally taught at the Harvard medical school; he was a doctor but a teaching doctor--left mostly debts, and he had eight children. The four sons all made money, and the four daughters all married money. [laughter] But the Reynoldses have gone on, by and large, never making-- You know, I mean, they made a comfortable \$2 or \$3 million, this kind of thing. There's never been any-- They never work for a major corporation--never been an IBM or an AT&T--but they were successful businessmen.

The Coolidges by and large did nothing before father's generation except marry money. [laughter] Well, Joseph Coolidge II made some money, but his son spent it. His grandson married money, and that was the kind of tradition.

SMITH: In preparing for this, I noticed while you were on the board of trustees for the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, there were several other Coolidges. Charles Allington Coolidge and others. Were you related to those Coolidges?

COOLIDGE: Yes, the Coolidges are all related. Broadly, any Coolidge you've ever heard of, I'm not related to



closely. Charles Allington [Coolidge], who was a very leading attorney and a member of the Harvard Corporation for a long time, was a very distant cousin, as was Calvin [Coolidge], an eighth cousin or something like that. We all know each other and get along pleasantly. Charles Allington came to dinner here at least once, and I'm sure we dined with him. The other person you mentioned was Thomas Jefferson Coolidge. My grandfather named his children, his five sons, after distinguished members of the family, like Thomas Jefferson. He was Joseph Coolidge, and his oldest son was Joseph Randolph Coolidge, who was Jefferson's son-in-law, I guess. My grandmother's name was Gardner, and my impression of Grandmother Gardner was little and adorable. Grandfather looked like the Zeus from "Otricoli." He was handsome as well as being idle. [laughter]

SMITH: Was she related to Isabella [Stewart] Gardner?

COOLIDGE: She was sent to a finishing school in Paris at the age of eighteen or thereabouts, and also at that finishing school was Isabella Stewart. When they got back to this country, they exchanged visits to New York and Boston, and she introduced her brother, Jack [John Lowell] Gardner, to Isabella Stewart. The relationship there has always been close. Isabella Stewart and Jack



had approximately equal wealth. Isabella and Jack had no children. Well, they had two or three children who died young. But Jack Gardner left, I think, \$40,000 each to all his Gardner nephews, and if there was a niece probably the niece. Isabella Stewart Gardner left \$40,000 apiece to all Julian Coolidge's children, and the executor of her estate was my father's brother, Harold Coolidge, who must have gotten enough out of that to be the equal of \$40,000 apiece to each of his three children. She left an object as a present to each of us. I got--I'll show them to you--a pair of silver candlesticks, as my brother did. She split a quartet of silver candlesticks with my brother, whose first wife had either a better pair or a quartet, so my brother gave me his pair as our wedding present, and we have four candlesticks that came from Aunt Belle.

SMITH: So you've said that in your career you've felt somewhat suspended between the academic and the Boston society? Cambridge and Boston.

COOLIDGE: Cambridge and Boston. My first real job was the navy, during the war, and that was in naval communications. And then, after a couple of years, I came here as [an assistant professor]. In the middle of my first year here, I was offered the directorship of the



Fogg [Art Museum, Harvard University], and I certainly was interested. One reason for taking it was my desire to find out if I was at all an administrator. I have never cared, until the very end of my teaching career, cared in the sense of making friends with-- I got on with and sure had pleasant friendships with the Gardner family, for instance. But by and large, so to say, Beacon Hill society and its New York counterparts that I met and went to Groton [School] with I've never found sympathetic. I didn't dislike them; they just weren't my friends. I, therefore, felt the need in myself of proving to myself that I could run things and was not unhappy running things that brought me into contact with that kind of society, and this came out as a director of the Fogg. A bit of institutional history here that we can get into later, but in passing-- The directors of the Fogg were also trustees of the Boston Museum [of Fine Arts]. I was an active trustee. Even after I retired from the Fogg, they made me a regular trustee, and I ended up for two years as president of the board. All of this indicates a continuing aspect of my life, the need to prove myself as a snob when I didn't enjoy the snobs. I early discovered that I was not a club man, and though I was elected to one good club in Boston, I resigned



after a couple of years. I've been told I could have been-- Well, you know, people implied, "If you want to be a member, just say so. We'll get you in." But I'm not a club man. On the other hand, much of my life was generated by this need of being accepted by the outside world as a Boston snob. [laughter] And proving to myself that I was not simply an ivory tower academic, but could be an administrator as well.

SMITH: That will undoubtedly--

COOLIDGE: That will come out, but the time to bring this out was in connection with father and my inheritance.

SMITH: You said in passing that you were sent to Groton.

COOLIDGE: I went to the local school, which was Buckingham, which is now Buckingham, Brown, and Nicholls, because they're coeducational. Then to Shady Hill School, which was founded in approximately 1920 and which was an experimental school, was progressive education. And father was briefly, and I think not very happily, a trustee of that.

I was progressively educated, and this came as an utter astonishment to the headmaster of Saint Andrews, East Grinstead. I knew not a word of Latin, but I was a better mathematician than any of the students in the school, a much better mathematician. They took me in, I



thought, because I was a likely looking American and I could pay the bills. It was a kind of experiment. They were astonished that I had adequate intelligence, but I had such wildly different education from my contemporaries.

This had one curious, interesting result: The school was tiny. I think only fifty or sixty boys. That may be inaccurate, but it was small, so that you had the headmaster and perhaps five or six teaching masters. That meant, of course, every master taught a couple of subjects. There was of course a grading system. There was elementary math up to high math. There was elementary history up to high history. Boys were not graded by age, but were graded by competence, so I was in elementary Latin and in very much senior mathematics. And so forth and so on. That meant, however, that my classmates could be three years younger than I. They could be my own age, or they could be three years younger.

It also meant that if you had a boy who was gifted in a subject or who, shall we say, knew French because his father had been in the embassy and grew up there, he would get into advanced French at the age of nine and be sticking there for three years. The master, who was not



a French teacher but, shall we say, a mathematician who knew French and therefore had to teach French, had to change the course in advanced French every year so that this poor kid was not repeating it. It meant that the level of teaching was the highest I encountered until I got to graduate school. It was intellectually a fantastically good school, without being, in any sense, preeminent. It was just that they had a good system. It was a time in English history when able men had been in the Indian army, and, for whatever reason, at the age of forty they got out of it and found a job teaching math at a boys school, because there weren't all that many jobs going in the twenties, in '27. So they got very intelligent people teaching. And it was fresh for the teachers; it had to be fresh for the teachers. So that the combination was remarkable, which had the result of making Groton an intellectual disaster, well, at the word go. That was very little real stimulation thereafter.

SMITH: How long did you stay at Groton?

COOLIDGE: Four years.

SMITH: So you went the full four years?

COOLIDGE: Well, there were six when I went there, and I went for the last four. In fact I went into the second form, so I went there to five, but I was pushed up within



a month. My parents expected me to stay five years, but I was pushed up by Groton and stayed four, which, of course, made me young for my age all the way through college. Not seriously, but I mean I was sixteen, I guess, when I was a freshman. The average age then was nineteen.

SMITH: Was there ever any question that you were going to go to Harvard? Had you considered other schools?

COOLIDGE: Oh, yes. Oh, sure. My sisters, for instance, had been all over the lot, including [University of] California and [University of] Wisconsin and Radcliffe [College]. I couldn't begin to tell you. Only one of the five was really an intellectual in college. It proved difficult for some of them, so they moved for various reasons. I don't think anyone ever flunked out, but they would sort of think it would be fun to transfer from Radcliffe to the Middle West. They would do that kind of thing.

I can't remember. I think not. Practically all of us knew where we were going, and nobody thought of applying to more than to the obvious college. And Groton, one of the many appalling things about it was that it thought that it was the best school in the world, and in fact everybody got into the college to which they



applied. I might say in passing--for I wouldn't want you to forget this--at my twenty-fifth reunion, a classmate [William Perry] who was a bit deaf when he was in college and by his middle twenties was appallingly deaf-- Intelligent man. Made his career in Harvard administration, where he wouldn't be dealing with large groups of people, where it was mostly one-to-one conversation. He gave a talk to the class and said that he had looked up the situation of the freshman class. Harvard admitted our year a thousand freshmen out of a thousand and one applicants. [laughter] If the family feeling was that you were going to Yale [University], there was no problem getting in.

SMITH: Later I thought that we might move on to the Harvard culture, the life at Harvard as an undergrad. I've been doing some--

COOLIDGE: You don't want anything about schooling. I'd be perfectly happy to go into that or skip it.

SMITH: Well, actually, why don't we-- If you could mention who some of your fellow students might have been, if there's anyone of note.

COOLIDGE: Nobody of note. In my second-grade year at Buckingham, I met Sherwood Washburn, who I've known ever since. He was my classmate at Groton and Harvard and



ended up a distinguished anthropologist at [University of California] Berkeley. I can't think of anybody in my Groton class who was particularly distinguished. One of them, I believe, was a state senator in Virginia. I haven't kept in touch with other people other than Sherry Washburn.

I will say that Shady Hill was a stimulating school because it was progressive, Groton abysmal because it wasn't. The thing that appalled me about Groton, and still appalls me, was that after I left it, after I got to college, I realized that there was only one member of the faculty for whom I felt any intellectual respect.

SMITH: Did you ever consider asking your father to take you out of school so you could go to Cambridge Latin School?

COOLIDGE: No. I disliked school at Shady Hill, and I guess as a kid, Groton was just school. It was something you did, like going to church. Mother was passionately religious, and we all went to church at all possible occasions. This was part of life and growing up. I was never miserably unhappy. My older brother [Archibald Coolidge] went there and I guess by mutual consent left. I don't know whether he was fired, but he certainly was very happy to leave, and that may have affected me. May



have. I guess I've always had a side of me that wants to be respectable and not to think of leaving. Although I seriously thought of leaving Harvard my sophomore year. I had a miserable sophomore year. A member of the faculty I trusted said, "Look, you're halfway through. For the likes of you, the last two years here are the best. If you transfer now, it will take you an extra year. Stick it out, and then you can go anywhere you want." And that was absolutely right advice.

SMITH: Now, when you came to Harvard, you came with the idea that you were going to become an architect.

COOLIDGE: Yep. I majored in fine arts, took the introductory course in fine arts my freshman year, which was not unusual but special. Incidentally, [I had] good enough grades on my college entrance so that I was not compelled to take math. I got highest honors in that exam. I was exempted from taking English writing.

What's it called? Expository English. And I guess that was all. But those were the two.

It took me two years to get a D in geology, which was famous as the easiest science course. I'd had lousy science at Groton. I'm appallingly ignorant of science today. I've bought elementary science books and I have proved unable to teach myself. I can't tell you what the



second law of thermodynamics is, which I understand is absolutely basic, that it's perhaps the most basic thing, according to James [B.] Conant, in science. I have struggled with the books and haven't been able to find out. It has something to do with energy and heat is about all I can say. I was not taught science.

Very much history. I certainly thought of-- Though I knew about architecture, I thought about the law and I thought about diplomacy, because my parents had taken us to Europe frequently. We had a French governess when I was growing up. While I'm to this day not really good at French, I could manage in France when my freshman year in college I spent the summer in France. Then I really learned what French I have, which is maybe a little better than average for a professor, but not really good. So it was fine arts and mostly architectural history. Other than the introductory course, I took an introductory course in Asiatic art, which wasn't intentionally architecture. It was half architectural history, half other things, heading for distinguished professors and that sort of thing.

SMITH: Did you belong to any clubs?

COOLIDGE: I belonged to the Signet. I was elected to a waiting club--I forget which name--but I turned that



down. Clubs were associated with my Groton classmates, whom I didn't see once I got here, except for Sherry Washburn. My best friends, several of them, came from [Phillips] Exeter [Academy], and the people I knew were all honors. There were a dozen of us in college who, so to say, roomed together significantly, in that we all applied to a house as a group so we would all be in the same house.

SMITH: Which house was this?

COOLIDGE: We applied to Dunster [House], and Dunster said that because of me, as a matter of inter-house courtesy, they would take the twelve of us, but they really didn't want the twelve of us. So father took the twelve of us in Lowell House. I was in Lowell House, but father's presence made no difference at all. It was obvious that I was the master's son, but one didn't have any contact with him.



TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE TWO

APRIL 8, 1991

COOLIDGE: What college meant for me was, particularly freshman year, a glorious escape. No clubs, no, in Harvard. Harvard was a fantastic escape. In the first place intellectually, in that I discovered--and again, this was shocking, remained shocking to me, about Groton--the whole world of the modern arts. Thus, my sophomore year, when I took a course with T. S. Eliot, I knew who he was. I'd read T. S. Eliot because of a close friend [Cesar L. "Joe" Barber] who was taking a course in English, and so forth and so on. But all of that had not existed at Groton.

SMITH: This course with T. S. Eliot, what was its subject and how did he teach it?

COOLIDGE: It was in contemporary literature. He had a very senior graduate student named Ted Spencer who was his assistant. Ted was, well, a lecturer or something; he was just shy of being an assistant professor, that sort of level. Eliot unloaded a great deal of the lecturing on Ted Spencer. We began with English, late nineteenth century.

SMITH: For instance, Matthew Arnold?

COOLIDGE: Next generation. I can't think of the men.



SMITH: Hopkins? Gerard Manley Hopkins?

COOLIDGE: Definitely that. Possibly Matthew Arnold. In any case, definitely Gerard Manley Hopkins. We ended with a poet that he said was the best of the younger people that he had run into, though he was editor of the Criterion. I think he hadn't published anything in the Criterion by [W. H.] Auden, but he mentioned Auden's name. And it was a question of not very exhilarating lectures about individuals. His official lectures that he gave were not very good. The same year he was asked to lecture at [University of] Virginia. He gave something like three lectures there, which were much better. He published two books that year, the six Harvard lectures and the Virginia three. The Virginia ones were much better.

What was enormously illuminating was the point of view of an artist. I mean, his remark that he didn't consider you knew a poet well until you could write poetry in his style that was a passable imitation. The idea that he could sit down and write a piece by Hopkins, or what you wish--or for that matter Milton--staggered me. I didn't know that you studied poetry or any art in that way. I can't remember much otherwise, except for one purely social thing.

SMITH: That might be interesting.



COOLIDGE: The class was fifteen, maybe. You had to apply, and there were about fifteen. And towards the end, he gave a tea party for the fifteen of us at his apartment in Elliott House. And at that occasion, in a sort of back corner, there was a tall, athletic-looking, blond-- Looked like a feisty football player sent over by central casting. At the end of tea we left and said good-bye. I was next to the last, and the last was this man. And this man introduced himself to Mr. Eliot and said, "I'm from Saint Louis. I understand that you are from Saint Louis, too." Eliot looked at him and said, "I had the good fortune of leaving Saint Louis rather earlier than you." [laughter]

I can remember being interviewed by Eliot to get into the course, and he asked me what poetry I liked or had been reading. My last year at Groton we'd read a translation of a Greek play by Gilbert Murray which I rather liked, so I mentioned this. His comment was "Swinburne cum water." Swinburne was the name of the poet that I was seeking, rather than Hopkins. But I think we began with Swinburne. I'm not sure of that. In any case, one was aware of that point in history, the kind of thing that Gerard Manley Hopkins was consciously differing from, as it were.

SMITH: Were you an avid reader of modern literature at



that time, when you were an undergraduate?

COOLIDGE: In my freshman year, I bought in Paris certainly Ulysses and D. H. Lawrence. With the result that my grandson, when he was at Stanford, came for a summer or an occasion or something, found these on our bookshelves, and was bug-eyed that they were first editions, because I bought them in '31 when I was there as a kid.

This was one thing I did the summer of my freshman year. I got to know a professor, a young professor whose name will come to me, who became-- He died young. Very well known as a student of American literature. Frank Otto Matthiessen. Around Matthiessen, in a department of history and literature here, there was a whole group of modernists. I was not part of that because I was concentrating in fine arts, and this was very consciously that. But I was very close to it because one of my best friends [Joe Barber] was very much part of that.

SMITH: I understand from some of the reading I've done that Harvard at the period that you were attending was undergoing I guess what was a very painful transition, but a successful one, from more or less a gentleman's school to a much more serious, intellectually rigorous place. Would that description fit in with some of the perceptions that you had of Harvard at the time, or was



there a range of intellectual interests?

COOLIDGE: There was a change of presidents, from Lawrence Lowell, who was a marvelous man we knew well because he was a cousin--and I knew really well the family--to James Conant. I guess my freshman and sophomore years were with Lowell and my junior and senior with Conant. Conant announced that he wanted Harvard to be a national university, and the first thing that that meant was that you consciously went after students. You diminished the percentage of students that came from New England and New York. After I left, after he'd been there only two years, he introduced the whole "publish or perish" thing. So I would say that I did not directly experience-- You were describing a real change. But I think that that change took place between '35 and '40 rather than between '32 and '35, when I was there.

On the other hand, while there were monumentally conservative areas, like the Harvard school of architecture, there was, too, [the department of] history and literature going on. That tradition had gone back to Irving Babbitt and the New Humanism. Babbitt was, I think, not particularly interested in the Manley Hopkins, etc., tradition, but he was interested in lively contemporary art in general. Lively literature, I think you could say, was there for the senior person,



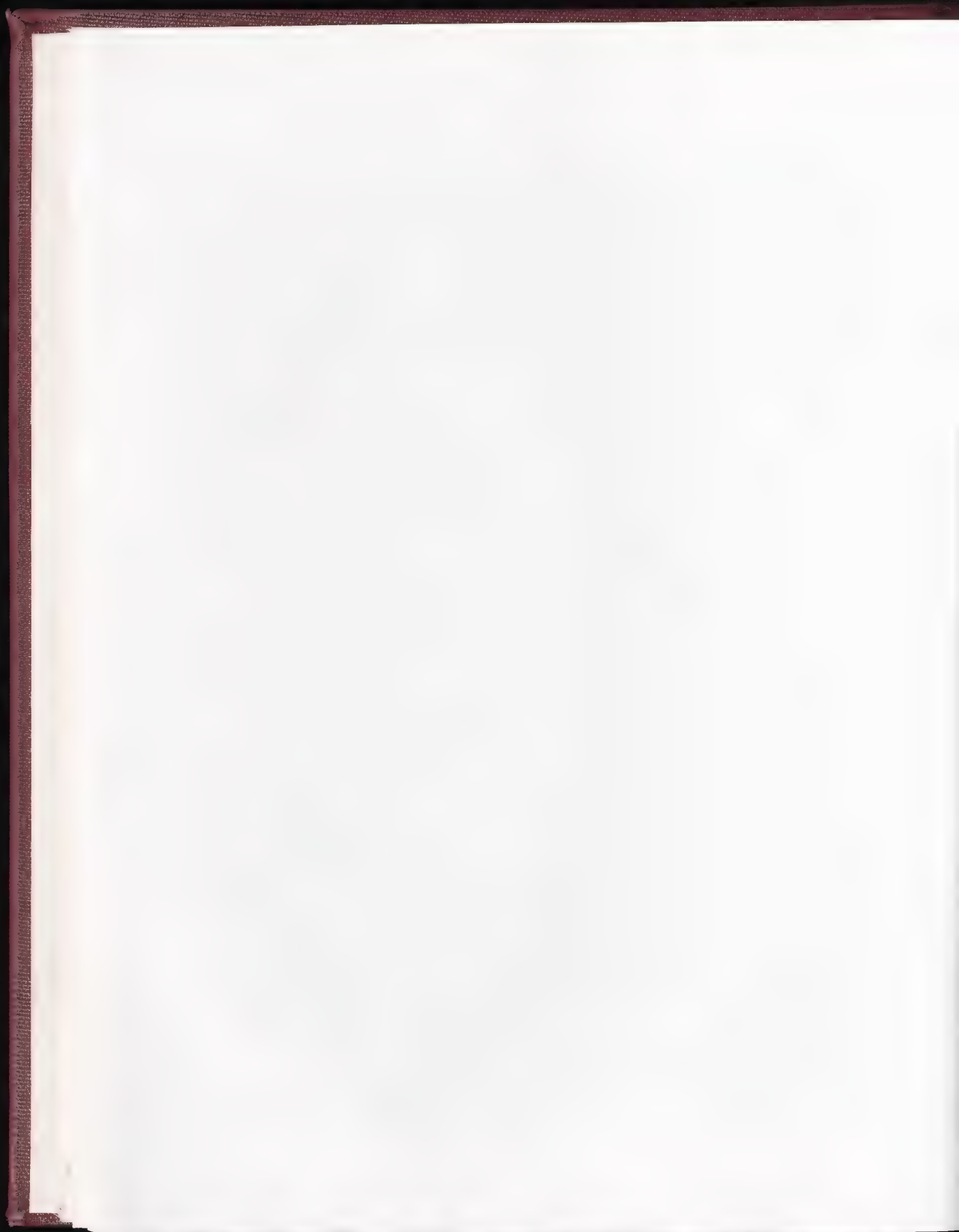
encouraging people like Matthiessen, and that American historian--

SMITH: Perry Miller?

COOLIDGE: Perry Miller. That crowd. These people I knew. Miller was older, but Matthiessen was assistant professor or something like that, and I knew him.

SMITH: You had classes with both Matthiessen and Miller?

COOLIDGE: I had classes with Matthiessen--and very nice. My classmate Joe Barber was a protégé of Matthiessen's. Joe said, "You've got to take a class with Matthiessen." And he told Matthiessen "You've got to meet my friend." So I took the class. Matthiessen was very easygoing intellectually, but surprisingly tough, a tough disciplinarian as regards the course. We had a paper of some kind, and it had to be in Friday at five o'clock. This was towards the end of the course. I guess it was a course paper. If it wasn't in, you'd be docked in your grade. And I got a B. I'd really worked hard at the course, and I got a B. I ran into Matthiessen in the yard after I got my paper back, and he said, "Your paper was late. I know you worked very hard, but I don't really think that if it had been on time I would have given you an A." Okay. He was the kind of teacher who could say that to you, who knew who you were as an individual, who knew he had met you and read your paper



with your presence in mind. Rare but marvelous kind of teacher. None such in fine arts.

SMITH: You were thinking of dropping out of Harvard. What was behind that? Was it you, or was it Harvard?

COOLIDGE: It was me. Entirely me. I'd never met a girl I gave a damn about, and I thought it was me. And I worried about it. I don't know. I think it was the contrast. Freshman year was so exciting. Sophomore year, somehow everything went wrong. Not seriously--I can't even remember what went wrong--but in any case there was a comedown. One of the things that my friends taught me-- They were so infinitely better educated than I was. Here I went to a school that considered itself the best in the world, and I didn't consider myself remarkable in Groton, but I really thought I'd had a good education. I meet these kids who were better linguists than I, who knew literature better than I did, who knew about modern music and heard it. All these things that I hadn't experienced. Then I realized it was a whole world that either Groton didn't know about or it was deliberately ignoring. I have always found it inexcusable that educational institutions are not concerned with the present period. Now, there are various degrees, but you can't be unaware. You don't have to teach them nothing but twentieth-century poetry,



but it has to be clear to the students that you know your twentieth-century poetry. This was something that they had been taught, and by people who were fully aware. Then, I suspect that that excitement-- Well, I'd had that, and then the next year-- I can't remember anything specifically going wrong except that it was just terribly gloomy.

SMITH: Were you reacting against a discipline? Too much discipline?

COOLIDGE: No discipline.

SMITH: No discipline. Was that what you were reacting against? The sense that Harvard was too--

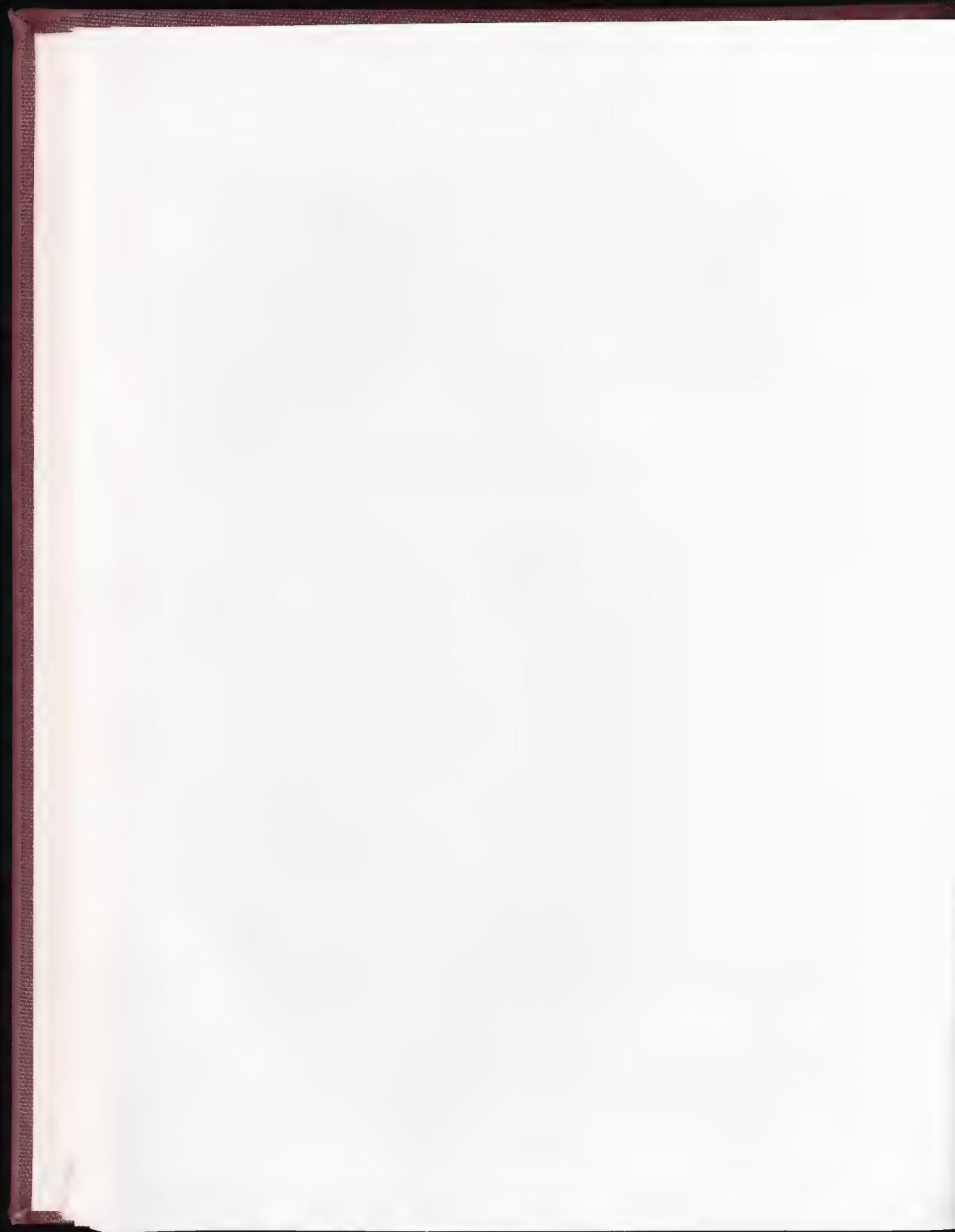
COOLIDGE: Well, I suppose it was partly that I had done everything by then that I wanted to do.

SMITH: But at any rate, you continued in the school.

COOLIDGE: I continued in the school, yes, and things almost immediately began to pick up. I went out for the [Harvard] Crimson and then out for the editorial page there, and that didn't work. That may have been one of the things that went wrong. But one began, or I began, by junior year to find aspects of Harvard which I could relate to. Professors you could talk to, things like that.

SMITH: Were any of them in the fine arts program?

COOLIDGE: My sophomore year I had a German aristocrat



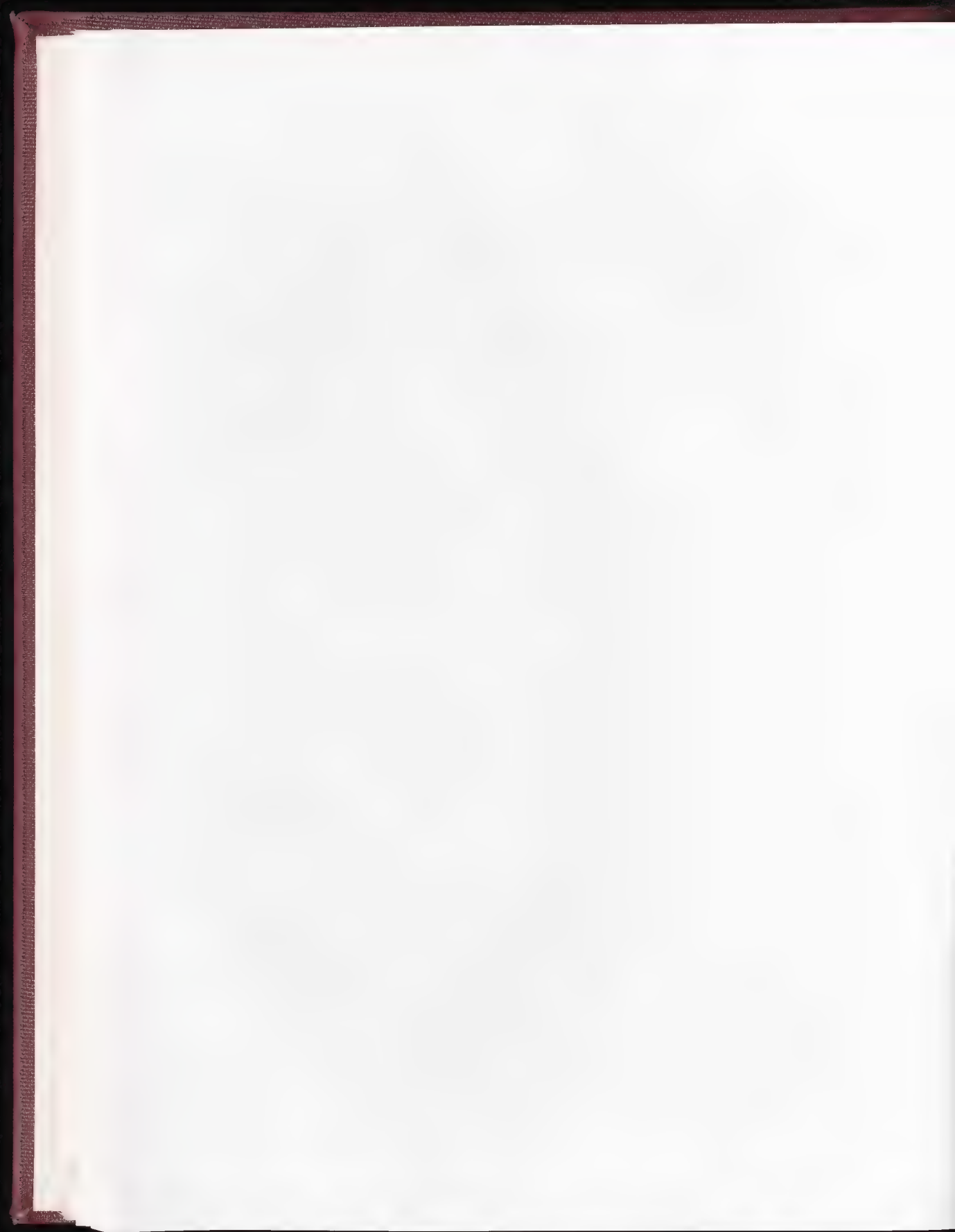
whose name escapes me now, but who had been one of the early students at the Bauhaus [Helmut von Erffa], and that was confidence building. But he was a young instructor and didn't stay on long. Kenneth [J.] Conant, who taught architectural history, I liked. I got to know him my freshman year. Then the summer of my freshman year when I was abroad in France, the guts of the summer I spent at his, so to say, dig at Cluny. He wasn't really very intellectually interesting, but it was an interesting discipline with which to have firsthand contact. To see what archaeology was all about.

SMITH: You took your introductory art history survey class from Conant?

COOLIDGE: No. It was in two halves, and this says a good deal about the way Harvard thought. The first half of the freshman class began with the Egyptians and ended with Constantine. The second half began with Constantine and ended with Picasso.

SMITH: Well, they got in Picasso, though.

COOLIDGE: It did bring in Picasso. It was taught by George Harold Edgell, who was, I think, the first Harvard Ph.D. in fine arts, who was an architectural historian. And by the time he got to be professor, he quit and became dean of the architectural school. He was dean of the architectural school all during my period. No, until



my sophomore year, I guess, maybe junior year. Then he quit that and became director of the Boston Museum. He was director of the Boston Museum until I returned, and I knew him as a trustee when I came back. Edgell was, quote, "brilliant," unquote, in the sense that he had a ready wit. The Constantine to Picasso course was really bright quips about every artist in between, and they were all included. The word superficial had not occurred to me, but the phenomenon of superficiality I became vividly aware of from that course, that covered everything briefly, ridiculously briefly, brought up no problems, everything just mentioned. He was the dean of the architectural school, which was thoroughly beaux arts.

SMITH: Beaux arts. Did that mean in this survey course he favored architecture over painting and sculpture?

COOLIDGE: Well, his Ph.D. thesis was, I think, on Siennese painting. He sent me a book he had written on Siennese painting. The book was so bad that he had an illustration that showed a painting and then an illustration that showed a detail of the painting, and the detail of the painting showed the object, the part of the painting, at smaller scale than the picture as a whole. He was capable of this kind of thing, of carelessness. He wrote a shallow book on American architecture, The American Architecture of Today, which

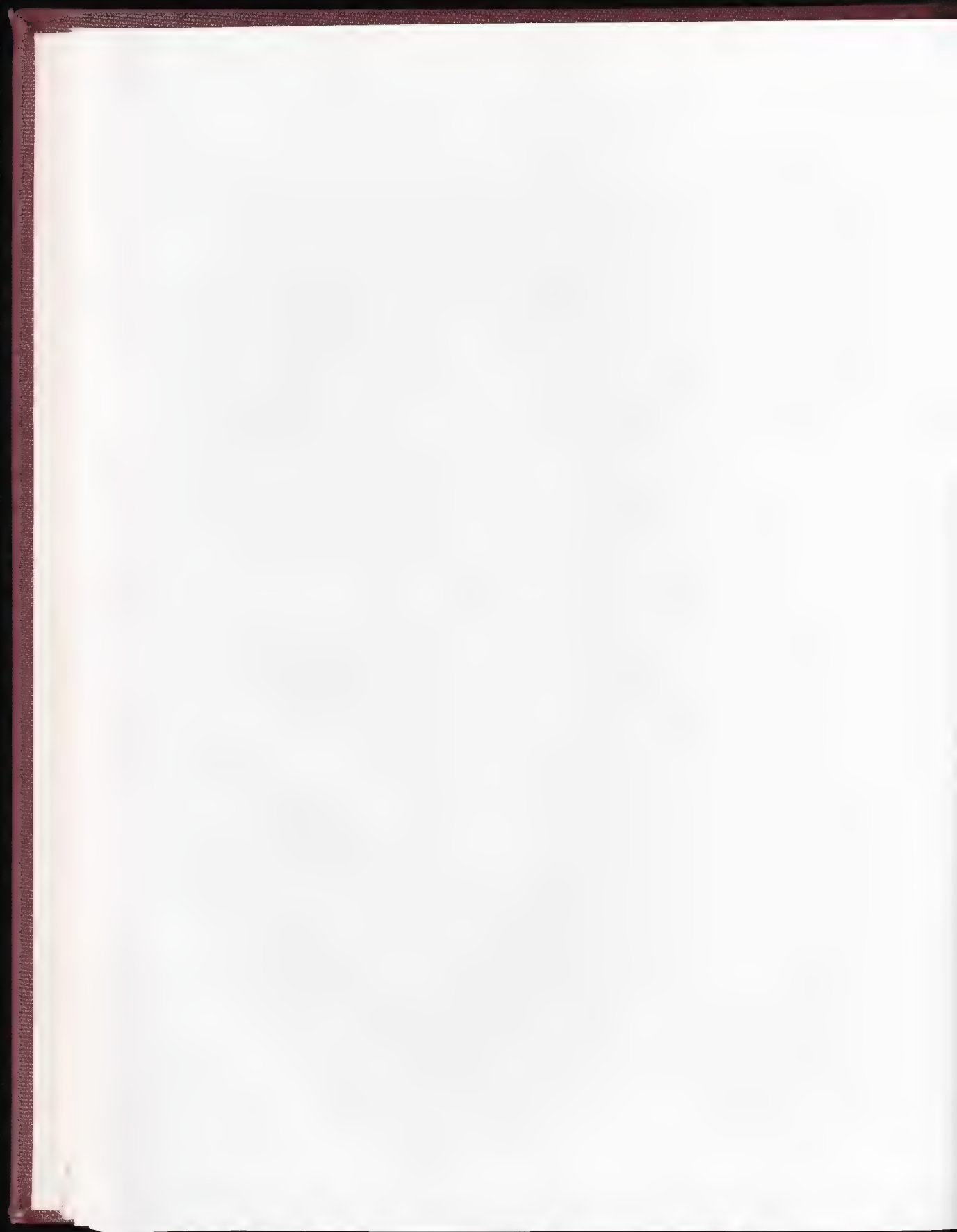


is a marvelous thing to realize the point of view, how American architects thought of themselves before the arrival of modern architecture. It's shallow, but it epitomizes their view of themselves. I can remember from this period going to the school of design, which had an exhibition devoted to the marvelous watercolors that graduate students made to illustrate a thesis--they had a thesis. The problem was a summer White House. So this was the kind of problem that they were dealing with in his day. And of course, already by freshman year, I was reading about the International style.

SMITH: So you didn't take any design courses, then?

COOLIDGE: No. I don't think so. Kenneth Conant was a professor at the school of design whose courses were accepted by the department of fine arts, so I took courses with him. But they were in terms of architectural history in the department.

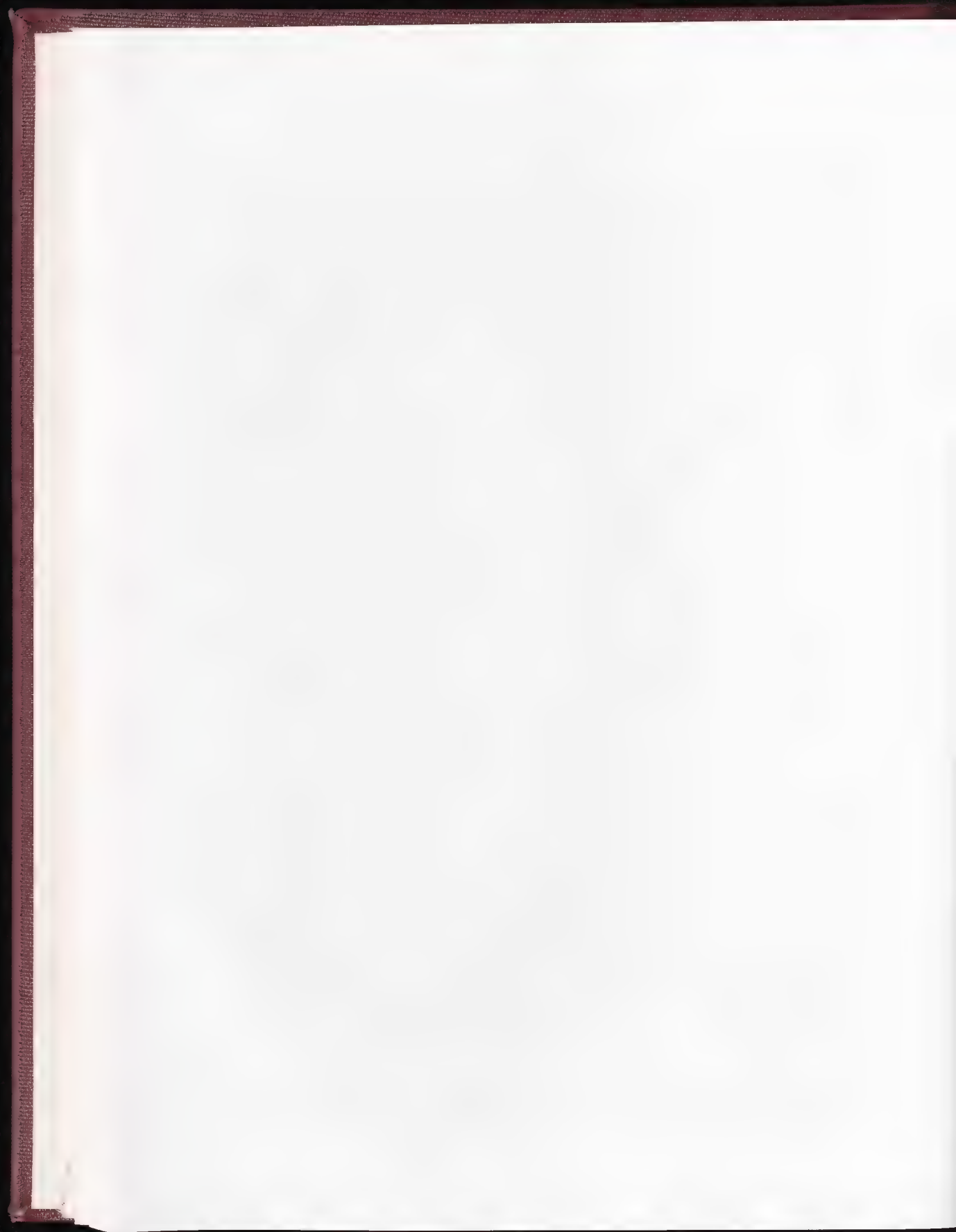
SMITH: In terms of getting back to Edgell's class, it may be skipping ahead a little, but I think it's appropriate, since I understand that you taught the freshman introductory course for a number of years. So I wonder if you could compare how you changed the course and perhaps discuss some of the differences in how competencies were judged. What were the kind of expectations that you set for students as opposed to the



expectations Edgell set? And then how you judged those expectations. The forms that you used, whether it was the types of tests, if you changed those, or the papers.

COOLIDGE: Well, my broad answer to this is no. I really haven't thought of this question, so I'll think about it as I talk to you, but I submit I don't remember very well. *[Perhaps the most striking and most illuminating difference between Edgell's course and ours was that he only showed one slide at a time. In principle we always showed pairs of slides. Thus a ground plan could be used to clarify the general exterior form of a building, or a portrait by Rembrandt could be contrasted to one by Velázquez. Edgell's presentation gave the name, date, and artist, where known, and was a vivid, often witty, characterization of the object shown. He also provided minimal introductory passages characterizing late antiquity, the Dark Ages, the Romanesque period, etc. But his fundamental objective was to present illustrations of works by the greatest possible number of artists, each briefly characterized. I cannot remember much, except that one of the French nineteenth-century painters shown was Carolus-Duran, with, of course, a single portrait. (All I know of Carolus-Duran is what I

* Dr. Coolidge added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.



remember from that lecture.) Emphasis was on characterization by the apt phrase; one work of art was rarely compared to another. The intellectual level of the characterization was like what you might tell your wife about the new people you had met at a cocktail party. I do not remember what reading Edgell assigned. I believe it was out of books like Kimball and Edgell's A History of Architecture or Chandler Post's A History of Sculpture. That is, concise surveys which essentially duplicated the materials in the lectures. I doubt if he assigned a paper.]

Edgell's course when he left was taken over by a youngish professor, and when I came back thirteen years later, it was still being taught by that professor. Harvard had acquired--just as I was graduating, so I didn't know him except as a name--a distinguished German refugee, Wilhelm Koehler, who was already a mature man in the mid-1930s. One year, I guess 1950, after I'd been here a year, he arranged a meeting between me and a--I was then thirty-four or thereabouts, thirty-five let's say--full professor [Frederick Deknatel] who was ten years older, forty-five, who had been chairman, who was very established but young. I mean, he had been leader of the department, and he may have been president of the College Art Association [of America], a thoroughly



established person. And the German refugee said that he thought the survey course was a disaster, and would the two of us join him in giving an alternative survey course. We did, and for a year or so, the two courses ran at once, and then the old-fashioned one was dropped.

The first difference was that we had from Constantine to Picasso, or later, over a whole year. It would be twice as detailed. I cannot remember, when I took that course in '31, that there were any section meetings. We had three lectures plus a section meeting in what became Fine Arts 13. The section meetings were led by senior graduate students. I had done that at Vassar [College]. I was hired at Vassar to teach sections in their introductory course. But at Vassar, the professors who lectured-- It was a course given by everybody in the department. Not everybody, but three or four members. Each of them ran a section meeting. One year while I was teaching the course at Harvard, one associate [Deknatel] agreed to share a section of the course with me, which is not Harvard style. I mean this was, I think, the first time that a professor, a full professor, a person with tenure, actually gave a section meeting. It only lasted that once. But that was the second change. The course was fully sympathetic to contemporary art. The first year it was given I taught



all of architecture. They divided up sculpture and painting between them, and I've forgotten just how. But that was Koehler's idea.

SMITH: So you would then come in once a week, or every other week, and deal with the--

COOLIDGE: No, I think I may have taken the architecture of the entire period. Architecture was, whatever, twelve lectures, and I may have begun the course with the history of architecture. They did the others. That seems to me the way it worked. But I'm not sure. It was then revised so that we did it period by period. And that varied, because after Koehler retired-- Well, a certain year after it had gotten going, Koehler took the whole thing for a year. It continued, and then that may have been his last year. But after he retired, various other members of the department taught it, and while you had at least three, sometimes it was tried out with five people teaching it. You would split up as you chose, depending on who you were working with. So that except for the first year, I taught sculpture and painting as well as architecture, in various periods. My doctorate was on Vignola, so I could. One year I did all of the Renaissance. I was interested in modern architecture, so one year I could have done modern, the twentieth century. What I did when I was responsible for nineteenth- and



twentieth-century architecture, I persuaded [Walter] Gropius to come in and give the lecture on twentieth-century architecture. That seemed to be wonderful, to have four hundred students from all disciplines over meet a practicing architect of reputation, and that sort of thing. That was necessarily unique. I think there wasn't a painter, there wasn't a Picasso, around!

All right, sections. Sections were planned. You had a group of graduate students who would be section leaders. One of the things that Koehler introduced was very strict laws about the use of graduate students as assistant teachers, because it had gotten to the status that people would take years and years to get their Ph.D., because various years they were in effect doing nothing but assistant teaching, not writing their degree. The fact that a given graduate student could only teach two sections, and you had twenty sections to dispose of, meant that in any year you had anywhere from six to fifteen people doing it. And the group would meet, and you would discuss what the section would be about. This is the sort of detail that I can't remember. I think when I was giving it, it was always more or less in line with the lectures. It was a wholly individual commentary on the lectures. The group decided that this next week was going to be nineteenth-century painting, and you



could ask questions about it. You know, well, the people would pipe up and say, "Look, if we can defer that until next week, there will be the opening of the Monet show, and they can go at that time. If we can do it the week before, the Monet show won't have closed." *[After we had served our turn, the course was given in essentially the same way by a sequence of professors until a few years ago. After I had retired as director of the Fogg, there was a notable development in Fine Arts 13 in the nature of the section meetings. With exceptions, such as the one mentioned devoted to medieval vaulting, the sections were held in a special gallery of the Fogg. This gallery was devoted to a series of rotating small exhibitions arranged for Fine Arts 13. The exhibitions changed roughly every two or three weeks. At the start of the term, the graduate students who were to be section leaders were assembled, and one or more exhibitions were allotted to each one. The exhibitions tended not to follow the lectures, but to treat related subjects. What is the difference between an etching, an engraving, a lithograph, etc.? How can you distinguish between an original in perfect condition, one that is damaged, one that is repainted, a copy, etc. What are the different

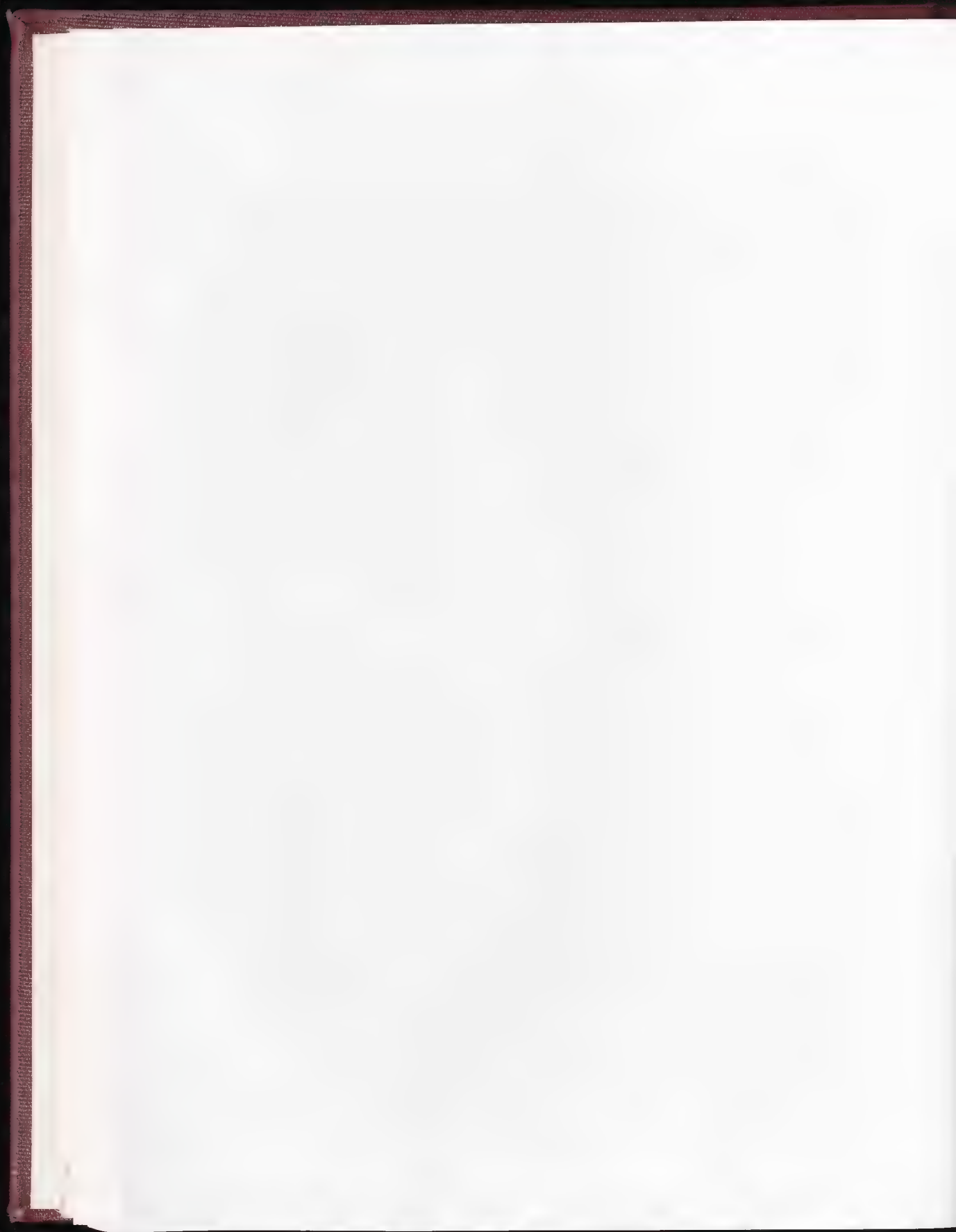
* Dr. Coolidge added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.



objectives of portraiture? Meanwhile, for reading we did assign passages from Heinrich Wölfflin, Geoffrey Scott, and Erwin Panofsky.

Many of us thought that Fine Arts 13, as developed in this way, was the best teaching the department did. It introduced undergraduates to the close study of original works of art and graduate students to the organization of exhibitions. Every professor gets tired of teaching the course, so it must change from time to time. As taught by certain professors, it was one of the ten most popular courses given in the college. Attendance had to be limited to four hundred, all the classroom could accommodate.]

The distinctive difference was that the old course, Fine Arts 10, had reflected the nineteenth-century and Anglo-Saxon point of view, and our course was the twentieth-century and basically Germanic point of view. The difference between them was like the difference between a description of somebody and an analysis of somebody. The Germans brought to the study of art a whole range of stylistic considerations and ultimately a concept of style and its relation to society that had simply not existed in the descriptive point of view. Art was the expression of the point of view of society, as everything else in a period expressed that same point of



view, as a difference simply from a noting of appearances. That's, I think, the fundamental reason. It's certainly the reason that the revolution took place in American art history before and after the war. But that's because the influence of the German refugees who came in the thirties began to be felt widely after the war. Their pupils were beginning to teach that kind of thing after the war.

SMITH: I was going to ask, in terms of when Edgell taught the class, you would have X number of hundreds of objects that the students would be expected to know for the test? The level of competency was to be able to recognize a work of art and identify it?

COOLIDGE: Yes, and I think one knew those works of art virtually entirely from photographs of famous objects. The library had developed a collection of photographs, so that you could, for example, take Rubens, by whom there are a jillion paintings, and by whom there are many hundreds on any given type of a landscape or portrait or what you wish. You could give a lecture on Rubens and the library would have a photograph of the slides you had used. Those photographs would be put out for you to consider, and then you recognized them in a slide test in the examination.

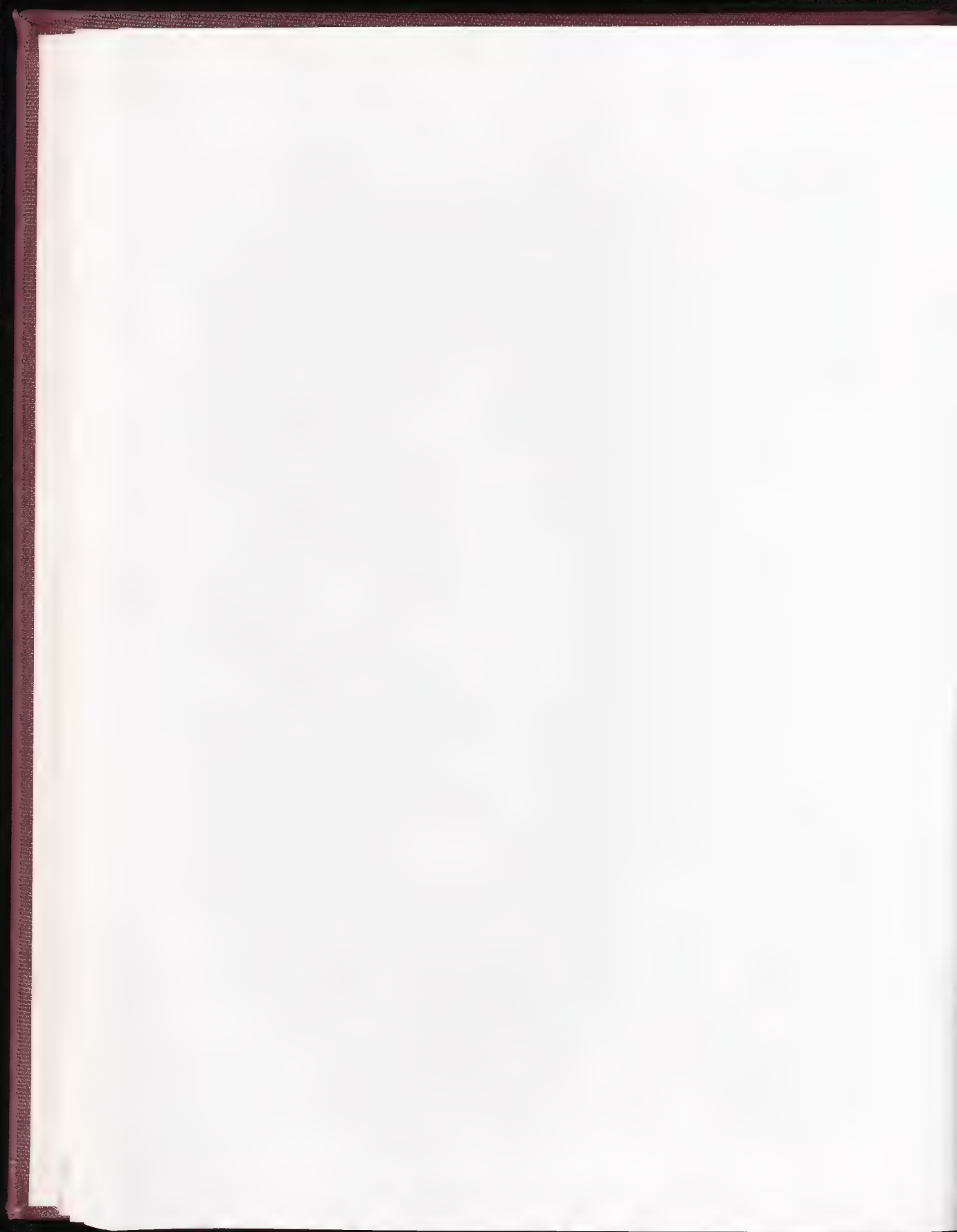
I can't remember a single one of the written



questions that went with the exams. It would be sometimes, in the earlier course, the historical, in the sense that-- Oh, what do we say? The baroque was associated with Louis XIV and with absolutism. You get a photograph of Versailles, you'd put down "Louis XIV and absolutism." Later on, you put on a photograph of Versailles, and you would say, "Well, it's classical, it's symmetrical, and this is French baroque." You would point out some aspect of the thing, the regular skyline that was baroque or play of light and shadow. "But the French accomplished this by bringing together certain classic principles in the way the Italians did it." That kind of analysis. And while individuals, and in smaller, more intensive discussions, would relate works of art very deeply to society, in an introductory course it would hardly get below the visual, the basic visual analytic phenomena--space, mass, light and shade, and that kind of thing.

SMITH: Was that course primarily aimed at beginning architects?

COOLIDGE: Oh, heavens no. It was a general course for any students who wanted to take one course in art history. It practically became obligatory, or something similar, for everybody concentrating in the field, but it wasn't designed for concentrators. It was designed for



people who were going on to be lawyers and just wanted to find out something about the history of art. There were comparable courses in music and literature. I suspect there would also have been a comparable a course in American literature or something like that.

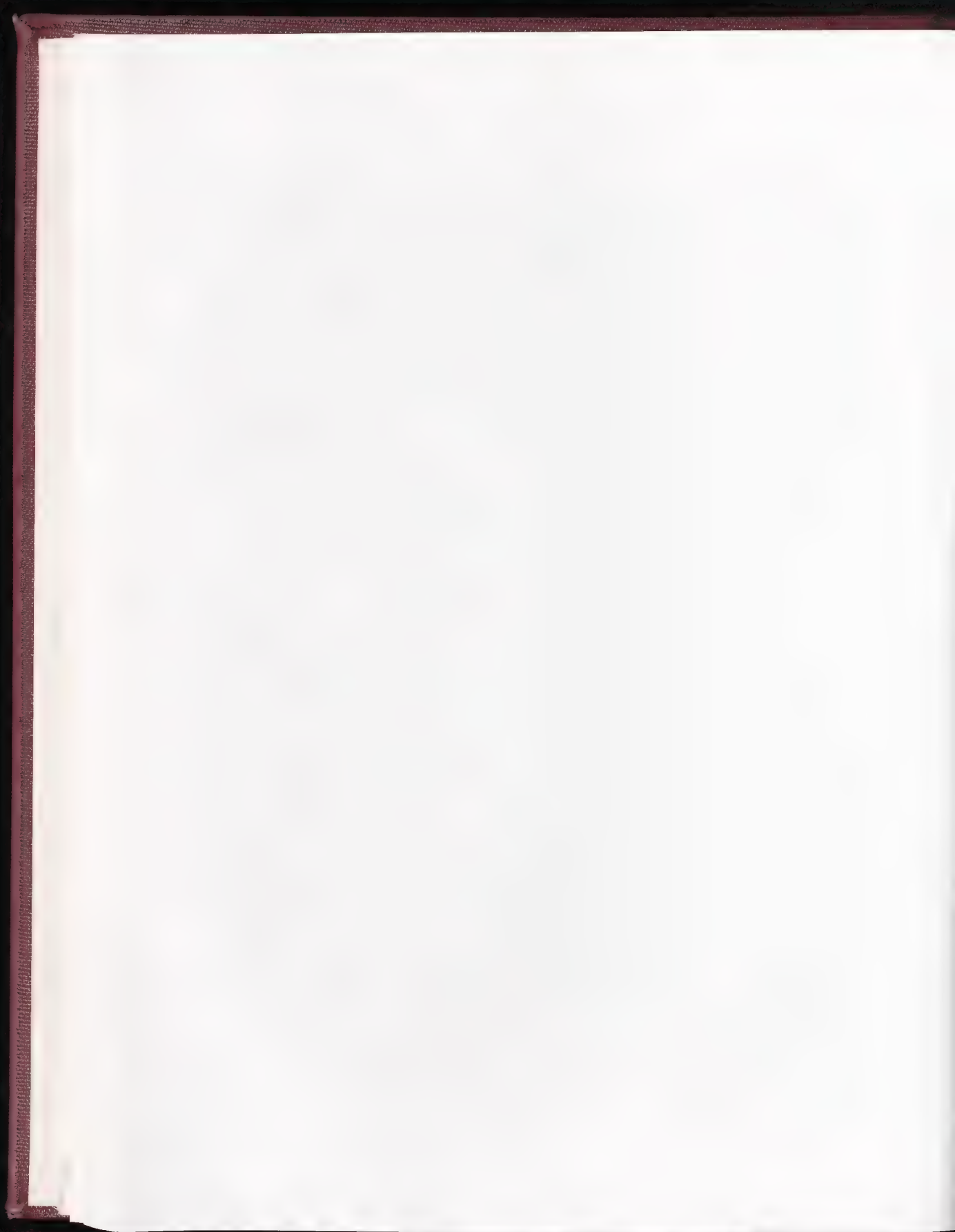
TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE

APRIL 8, 1991

SMITH: Is this the course that Charles Eliot Norton developed? I guess my more general question is, was there a Charles Eliot Norton tradition at Harvard [University] when you were attending?

COOLIDGE: He was an honored ancestor. But that's about like asking if there's an Abraham Lincoln tradition attending the Republican government today. I mean, no. There wasn't any real thing there. Well, when he died he was replaced by a whole group of youngish people, who were, by the time I got there, still around but very senior. They had, in their own way, broken from the Charles Eliot Norton tradition, as Norton's course was often labeled poetry, but it really included the whole of life: morality, ethics, poetry, and art. Whereas they introduced the study of art as the study of objects and divided into specific civilizations. One may say that in our course, there was much more emphasis on viewing original works of art of the period. We did not, when we began, get it very much down to the specific collections in the Fogg [Art] Museum. That happened later on, and I participated in that, but that was after I had retired as director of the Fogg.

Another thing that came up here and is interesting-- I had come from the University of Pennsylvania, where I taught for a year and which had, I think, twenty thousand students. Harvard had ten thousand or something. Though, in [James B.] Conant's word, Harvard and Radcliffe [College] were "coeducational in every way except theory," there was a regulation that any course which permitted freshmen could not be given coeducationally. And when [Wilhelm] Koehler and [Frederick] Deknatel came and made this proposition, I said that, as director, I was simply too busy to give the same lecture twice. We wanted freshmen; that was basic. But I just couldn't give the same lecture twice, once to boys and once to girls. I was delighted to do this, but I would not do it on that basis. And the chairman of the department went to see the dean, and the dean recognized that this was ridiculous. He said, "I am entirely in agreement with you. We ought to cancel this rule. But the fine arts department will have a much better chance of getting this through the faculty"--there was a faculty meeting--"if they apply jointly with one of the sciences." I think the fine arts department and chemistry proposed together that that rule be abolished. There wasn't a whisper of objection. It was long overdue. But such a thing could remain.



One of the things that drove me up the wall was when people would say, "But, John, Harvard is so big! You realize we have ten thousand students!" Well, having just taught at a university that had twice the number, I didn't get involved. All kinds of little things of this sort. Harvard-- Well, Harvard is Boston, and Boston's capacity for smugness is unfathomable. This still goes on, and one absorbs it. One becomes one's self part of it in different ways, but there it is.

SMITH: Hopefully transcends it and causes it to transcend itself. You had mentioned you also took architectural history courses from Kenneth [J.] Conant. Could you discuss those classes a little bit? Were they survey classes or particular topics?

COOLIDGE: I think Conant only taught courses on a period. He gave a course on ancient architecture or medieval architecture or modern architecture. That sort of thing. The courses were very comprehensive and very well presented. I can't remember the readings, but it would have been fairly standard. He introduced the point of view of a man who was trained as an architect and practiced as an architect and then later got a Ph.D. The knowledge of structure was basic. Structural forms were basic, and occasionally he would bring in structural phenomena that wouldn't occur to you right away. For

example, dealing with modern architecture, why did one not find in America concrete buildings of the sophistication of the finest contemporary European ones? The reply was that is because sophisticated concrete buildings need skilled labor on the forms, and the price of skilled labor is so much higher in this country that you simply can't afford it. We can't do it because we can't afford to do it. That kind of thing doesn't come up in the normal art historical point of view. This he would bring in, and it was very illuminating.

He too was interested in the original object. He would set a bunch of photographs out--I can remember the course on medieval architecture--and you selected from the bunch of photographs one or more that you copied in a drawing. That was his way of getting you specifically looking at a given building. Be it said in passing that he was, of course, a superb draftsman himself. It did not seem to me a very inspiring thing to do, to copy drawings, but there it was. You couldn't go and copy Saint Peter's. [laughter] You did a drawing of the photograph of Saint Peter's. That maybe was the best you could accomplish.

SMITH: Was he following the beaux-arts tradition in terms of architectural history education?

COOLIDGE: No. He was encyclopedic in his taste. In



dealing with a field, he knew all the phenomena and would fairly characterize them all. You can see in his collection-- He did a series of university prints on modern architecture, and it is amazingly comprehensive. So if he gave a course on modern architecture, you'd get Frank Lloyd Wright, you'd get Swedish modern, you'd get German, you'd get American, you'd get the works.

But Conant was almost wholly lacking in emotional attachment, so that he would show you all these ways of building a house without suggesting that one was in any sense better than another. They were merely descriptively different from each other. There was nothing of the missionary in Conant at all. But he was a very honest encyclopedia of a mind. Curiously, his very real personal attributes never affected his life. He was deeply religious and, I believe, a convert to the Greek Orthodox faith, but one would never know that he was a religious man, let alone that he was Greek Orthodox, in his presentation of the material.

SMITH: Was he an expert on Byzantine architecture?

COOLIDGE: He was a funny man. He loved individual buildings. His thesis was on Santiago de Compostela-- which has a magnificent baroque facade--and his generally accepted field of expertise was Romanesque architecture. But he also did some work with Byzantine, and he knew



pre-Columbian, American. The sort of man who had been places and fell in love with the buildings and would come back and incorporate a whole batch of stuff into the course. So he was a Romanesque architecture specialist, but a man of complete knowledge.

This had its limitations. Because he wrote the Pelican history of Romanesque architecture, and it contains a great many of his drawings. But he had originally intended to have it illustrated by nothing except his drawings of vanished monuments. This was taking it too far, and the editor wouldn't admit it. But even as a draftsman he wasn't limited. He did the drawing of the Lowell House tower that is on the Harvard plate, for instance.

But also, as a young man, he was in Venice and at the Lido and was making a drawing of Venice from the Lido. And he looked down at his paper and he looked up, and the Campanile had disappeared, and he couldn't believe his eyes. But, of course, as you know, the Campanile did fall down in 1910 or something, and he happened to be drawing the panorama at just this moment! [laughter]

SMITH: Perhaps I could just throw out a few names and get your thumbnail sketch of them. Some of these people I'm interested if you met them while you were an



undergraduate. For instance, Edward Waldo Forbes, had you taken any course work with him?

COOLIDGE: No, he taught only one very specialized course. I knew him by sight, but I never had any contact with him.

SMITH: Okay, then I think we'll defer further discussion of him until later on, when he must be very important. What about Paul [J.] Sachs? Did you take the museum course?

COOLIDGE: No, I didn't take the museum course. I didn't take any courses with him as an undergraduate. I took one later on as a graduate student. The only contact I had with him was that one had an oral examination as an undergraduate candidate for honors, and the word got around that Paul Sachs would ask you about objects in the Fogg. [laughter] So I prepared myself, but I neglected to consider a marvelous gallery which they had set up of pre-Columbian objects that were borrowed from the Peabody [Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard]. Of course, he asked me about Romanesque things, and I had a suitable answer for this, but when it came to the pre-Columbian, [laughter] he had me out. But I barely had a little more feeling for students, for undergraduates, than Edward Forbes did.

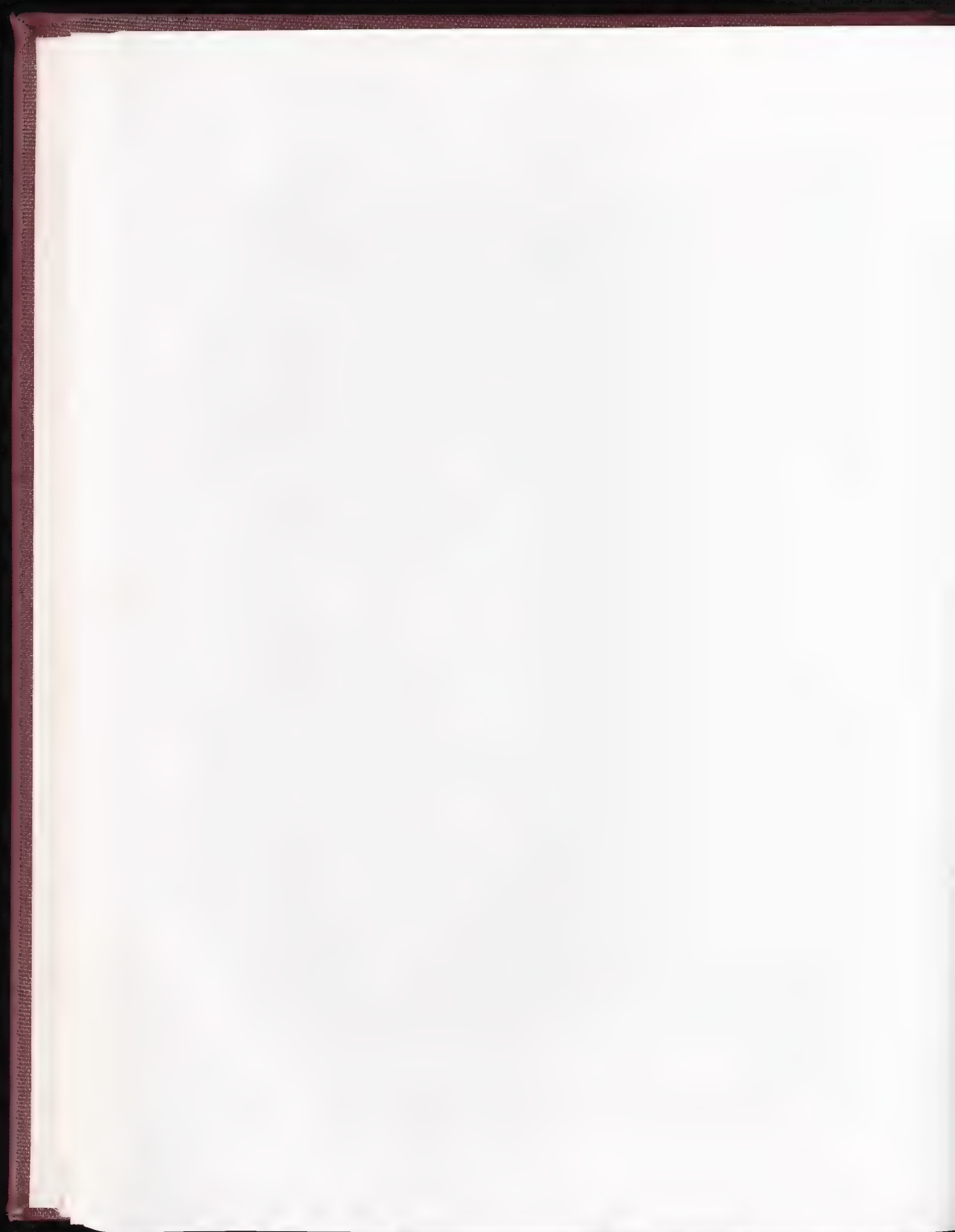
SMITH: Oh, really. The Fogg, at least according to the older literature, was intended to be a teaching



collection. To what degree were the objects utilized in daily instruction at the time you were an undergrad?

COOLIDGE: Well, I took no undergraduate courses-- No, that's not true. I would say not at all, or virtually not at all. Certainly not in any of the courses that I took, and I can quickly think of two that dealt with areas of great strength in the Fogg collection. You know that at one point, I guess early in the twentieth century, the French government officially photographed all the great monuments of medieval sculpture at least-- I don't know how far this project went, but shall we say the Portal of Vézelay and everything in Provence and so forth, in official photographs. There were professors who would teach Romanesque sculpture entirely from slides of these photographs. Very often I could go beyond that. The French also had plaster casts made of these, and the photographs were of plaster casts. These were up in the Trocadéro. I think the Musée de l'Homme, or whatever. They taught from slides made of photographs of plaster casts. They never discussed the first-rate original material that was in their own galleries. They simply took the most convenient black and white representation, and if it was a plaster cast of the original made no difference.

SMITH: In these kinds of classes, does one tend to focus



on the great monuments rather than items which may be excellent but are merely typical?

COOLIDGE: That's right. Because you are interested in the-- It's like characterizing Louis XIV as an individual or characterizing him as a baroque ruler. And going from him to George III or to any modern-day dictator, Hitler, making it vivid by bringing it up to an object or a person in the present day. They start with the standard famous objects of the past. I suspect the closest parallel might be in the way you taught the drama and whether, assuming you were teaching it in Los Angeles or Boston or New York, you taught it in terms of classics that you read or in contrasting plays that the kids have gone to see. Get a feeling for the drama, lighting, and costume and all that as part of the teaching the drama, as compared with a written thing.

SMITH: Did you have any classes with Hetty Goldman?

COOLIDGE: No. I knew her in Princeton socially and admired and liked her very much. She had a great personality. She obviously did a first-rate job at the Institute [for Advanced Study]. She was very nice, but no contact with her intellect at all.

SMITH: What about Chandler Post?

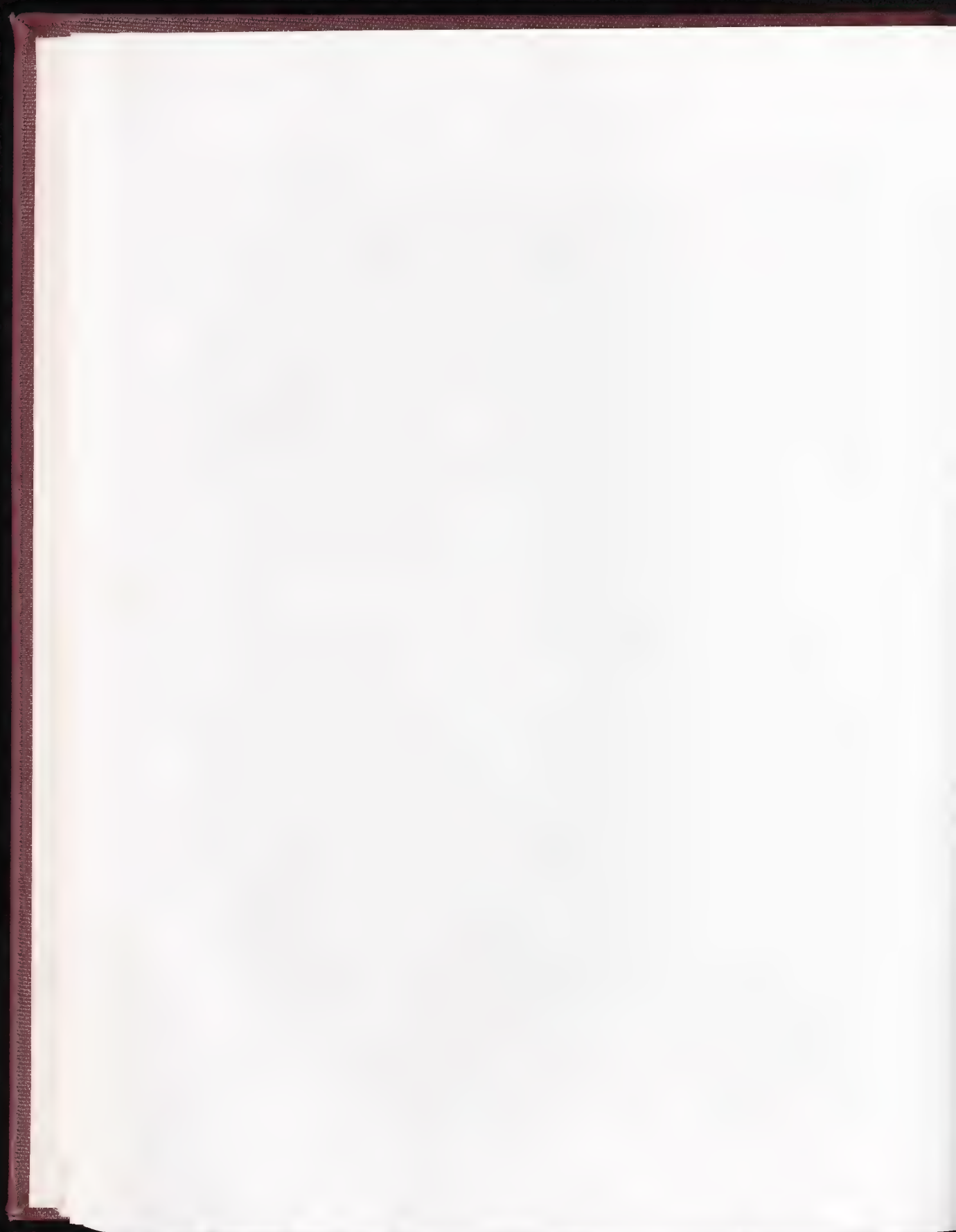
COOLIDGE: Oh, lots. I took an undergraduate course with him, and he was around when I came back. He taught a



course on Italian Renaissance painting, which was full of-- Well, just very thorough. He was thorough and accurate, always gave you the dates of every object, and rather expected you to know that. He would turn to an undergraduate class and show a painting of the visitation and turn to the class and say, "Well, what would any one of you say if I were to show this in the examination and ask you to talk to me about the iconography? What does the scene represent?" And so forth and so on. He was a man of fact, who knew a fabulous number of facts over an enormous range of the history of art.

SMITH: I assume, though, when he used a word like "iconography" he meant it in a very different sense than when Panofsky--

COOLIDGE: Yes, this was simply what's represented. It's like recognizing Uncle Sam, so to speak. Not a scintilla of indication of quality. I mean, when he'd come to Michelangelo, he had to show the Sistine ceiling, as it were, but no indication this was more important than the Visitation that he'd shown you in the previous week. He had an extraordinary range. He discovered long before--I think this was literally true--anybody else the interest in nineteenth-century American sculpture. He knew all the monuments in Mount Auburn cemetery, had photographs made of the best ones, as we have a fairly good



collection of slides--things of that sort. He was that kind of man.

Here I am warped, because I had such a striking non-relationship with him when I came back that I'm not sure that I can be fair about talking with him as a teacher then. I came here as assistant professor and then became director of the Fogg, and one of the conditions I made was that I should be an associate professor, not because I regarded myself-- I specifically said I didn't want to have tenure. Associate professors had tenure then. I did not consider this as tenure, but the department was run by an oligarchy of professors and associate professors, and I would not run the Fogg unless I was by right a member of that oligarchy. Well, all right, it was done. Six months after, I ran into Post, and he said something like, "Well, I hope you'll stay. I'm sick of having to vote a promotion for you every year."

[laughter] I never visited his house. I'm not sure he ever visited mine, although he must have been invited, because we did give parties for everybody. We didn't fight. We were incompatible.

SMITH: What about on the design side? Did you have any exposure to Denman Ross or Arthur Pope?

COOLIDGE: Arthur Pope, certainly. Took me two years to get through his elementary course. He was enormously



boring. I've never known a worse lecturer. I can think of somebody who competes with him, but I've never known anyone who was clearly worse than he. His course was an obligatory course on really the methods of art. You would copy drawings. You learned about color. You had a thing, a very good thing and most respected, about the color solid--you know what I'm talking about--which defines color by lightness and darkness and brightness and dullness. You can plot any color on a solid, because it's really a series of triangles. This will be red, this will be orange, shall we say, and that will be yellow. Then within the triangle-- Let's assume this is red. The brightest red is relatively dark, so that the brightest red is here. This measuring light and dark, this measuring brightness. The brightest yellow is relatively light. So that you arrange these things into a solid like that, and any color-- It's between red and yellow, therefore it's orange. It's midway on its scale of brightness. Then you get the intensity of color which is obviously at the end, and in the middle it's gray. So it moves in along this. You learn that, and you make a complete diagram of one color, let's say blue. Then he would bring in a blue object, and you'd have to see where it fitted into the color solid.

SMITH: Was this related in any way to Gestalt approaches



to art, such as [Rudolf] Arnheim or [E. H.] Gombrich?

COOLIDGE: No, it was pre-them entirely and related more, but quite deeply, to artistic techniques. Here I've forgotten, and I never knew it deeply, but a person like Titian used what was called a "balanced palette," and that would mean certain colors. He operated within only certain ranges in the solid. This kind of thing you would study. This is what happened in more advanced courses than any I took.

SMITH: At that time, was there any interest, or presentation, of a theory of aesthetic perception, or how people received art?

COOLIDGE: I took a course in aesthetics.

SMITH: In the philosophy department?

COOLIDGE: In the philosophy department, but that was my own doing.

SMITH: And who taught that course?

COOLIDGE: I can't now remember. He was youngish then, I mean maybe a young full professor then, but I've never run into his name and I can't recall it. A rather boring course, I thought. NYU [New York University] was so much more exciting in every way that I think I'm unfair looking back. I mean, as I sit here, it seems to me I keep saying that Harvard was boring intellectually. That may have been the way I felt as an undergraduate. It



certainly was the way I felt as a graduate student looking back.

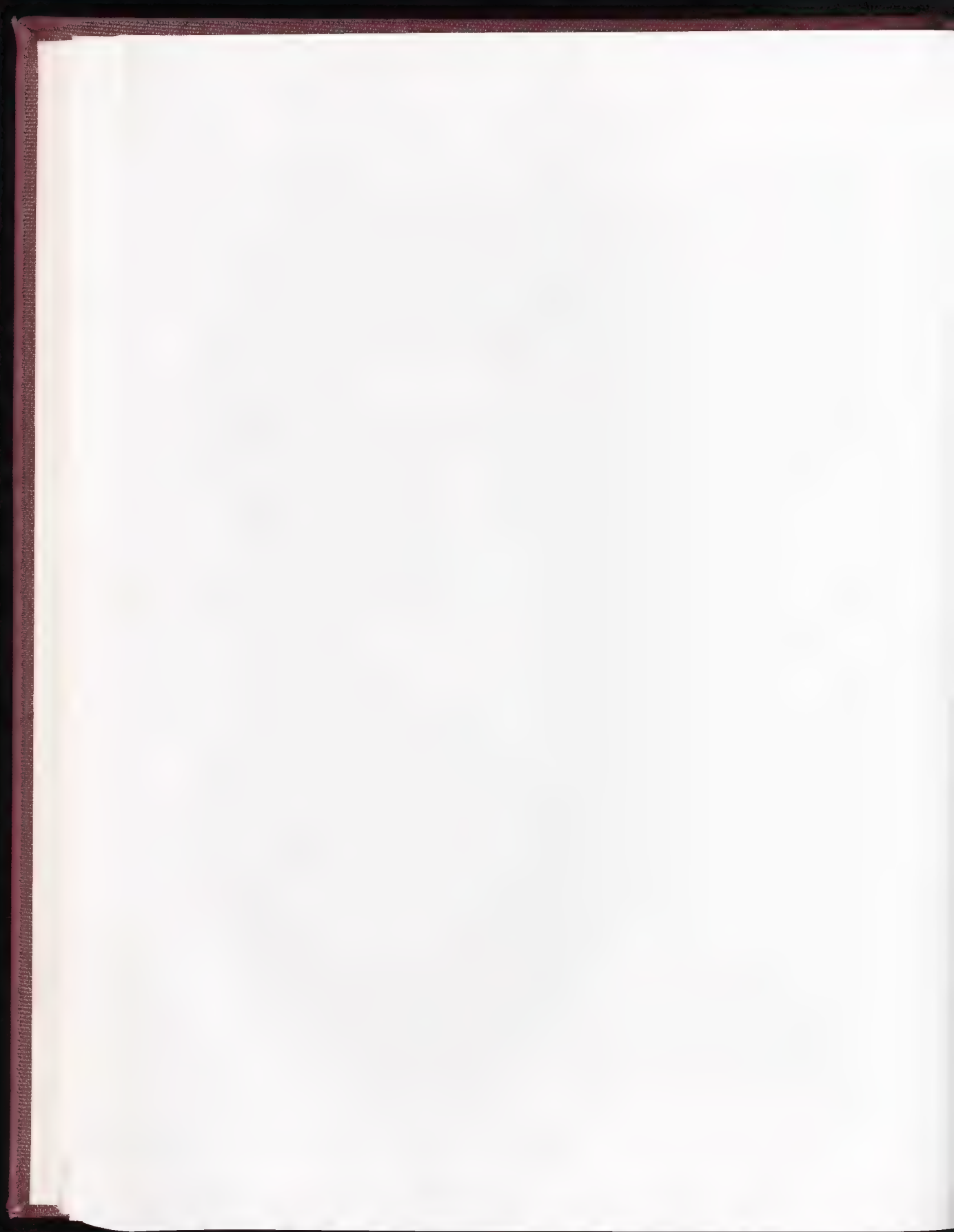
SMITH: Let me ask you about the Bernard Berenson presence in the Harvard fine arts department. Was that something that you were aware of at the time as an undergrad?

COOLIDGE: As an undergrad you knew about this man, about the way you might know of [Joseph] Duveen. He was obviously a figure. He had something to do with dealing and he was corrupt, and that was all you knew about him. The likes of me, an architectural historian, didn't get any further than that. I didn't know that he had any existence as a scholar.

SMITH: What about Ernest Fenollosa?

COOLIDGE: No, I had no contact with Asia at all. Oh, I take that back. I took a course with Langdon Warner. I'm sure Langdon Warner mentioned him, but I can't-- In fact I didn't-- I'm underplaying the amount of oriental art I had. No, I didn't know anything about him. You're thinking of him as an intellect probably, and I knew nothing about that. Some of these things I got to know after I came back, but I didn't as an undergraduate.

SMITH: Did you know Charles Kuhn or Agnes Mongan when you were a student? Did you know them as fellow students?



COOLIDGE: Well, neither of them were fellow students. Charles Kuhn became director of the Busch-Reisinger [Museum] pretty early on, I think maybe when I was a sophomore. Agnes Mongan was a secretary then, in effect, and I didn't know her. Charles Kuhn I was aware of. The younger faculty were familiar as a body, but the impression one had is that they didn't count. So one didn't know them or react to them. Your tutor was apt to be a member of the younger faculty, and you knew your tutor. The people who weren't your tutors, they were just members of this junior body. So that when I came back from England toward the end of the war and found that I was on board with Charles Kuhn, this was the first time I ever spoke to him as an individual. I think he had the same kind of knowledge of me, perhaps because I was formerly Harvard, currently a graduate student at NYU, who for family reasons came back and would be seen around the Fogg. But we didn't know each other. This was the first time we'd met.

SMITH: I'm sure we'll return to him later on. I think we can begin to wrap up your undergraduate years. A couple of questions, though. One is, were there tutors or advisers that you were particularly close to as an undergraduate?

COOLIDGE: My first tutor was Helmut von Erffa. I liked



him very much. He was very effective with a sophomore. Whether I was aware of this then or not, he was not going to make it. And the extent to which I thought of him as a personally kindly man and a man who'd had an interesting way of life but didn't count, I don't know. I have a feeling that I had some kind of feeling that he was more than a teaching fellow, but that one didn't count any more than a teaching fellow. So he was terribly nice to me as a tutor, but that year was over and I got another tutor and he eventually disappeared. But years later I had a question on his field of specialty and wrote him a note about it and got a warm letter back. This relationship must have been more two-way than I had realized.

He was succeeded, I think, probably--because he maybe had a leave of absence--by Benjamin Rowland [Jr.]. And Benjamin Roland made me study Hindu Indian sculpture, and I found him very sympathetic. He worked hard and he made you work hard. When you had worked hard, he would let you know that you had worked hard, and this was fine and you went back and you worked hard for him this way. There was a satisfactory kind of teaching. He was also a sympathetic kind of person. I remember, very vaguely, exchanging quite a sophisticated dirty reference with him. It had to do with the number 69, and he was

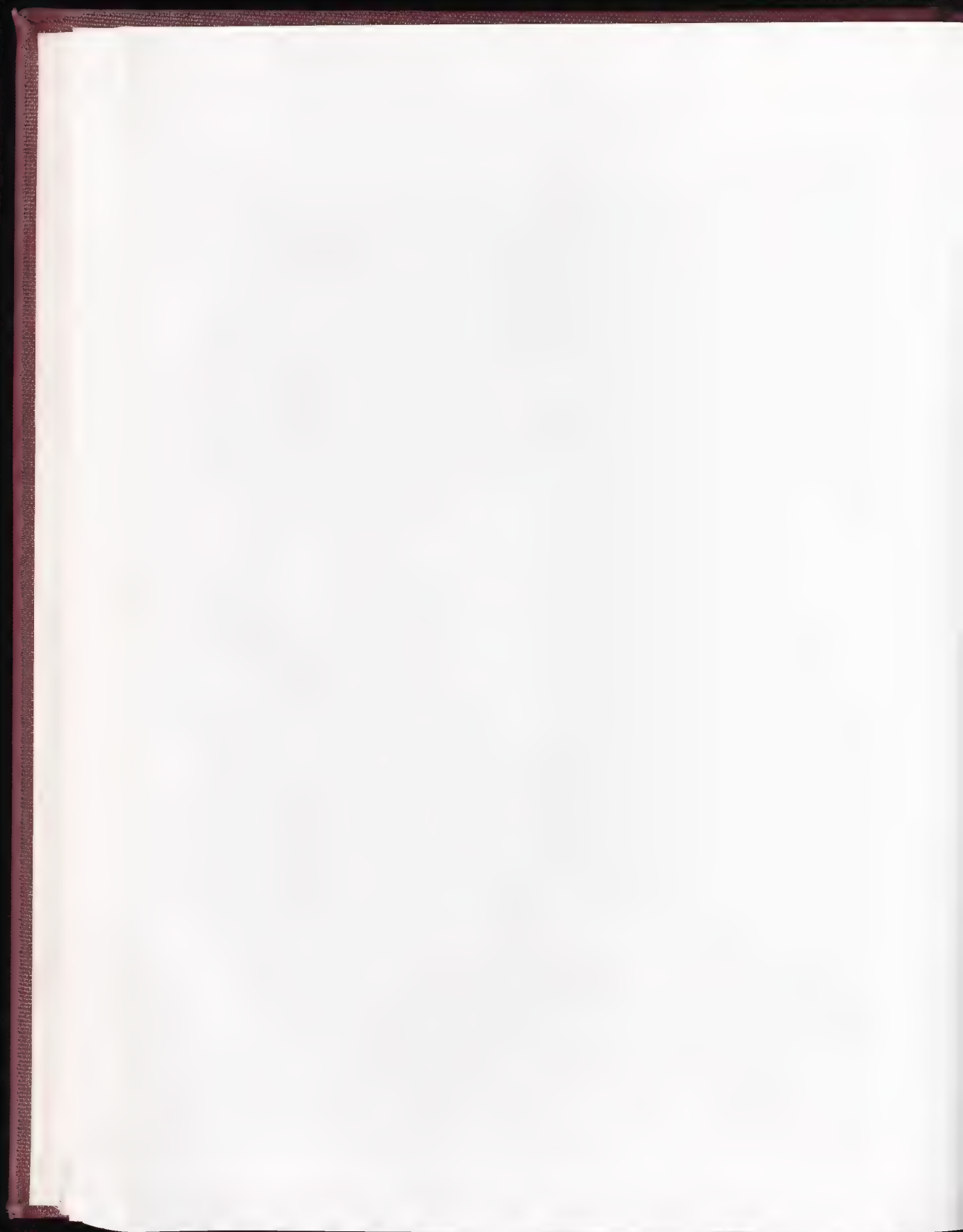


surprised that I knew it, but responded pleasantly. In other words, you could get beyond the academic level. On the other hand, he was a person that was, I think, the most uncommunicative and inhibited that I have ever known. So that while the capacity was there--you could, as it were, dare anything with Ben--it didn't become in any sense the basis of a deeper relationship. And you couldn't imagine a deeper relationship. It was simply a relationship of mutual sympathy, but no possibility of getting further.

Then I had Leonard Opdycke. Leonard Opdycke was the great pupil of Chandler Post, probably even more remarkable in terms of breadth of information and memory. He was my senior year. I was writing my senior thesis, and thereby hangs a tale. I'd taken two of his three courses on baroque architecture. Just very nice to get on with. He was like the world's finest encyclopedia. If you wanted to know something, you would ask him and get an encyclopedia answer. He was very glad to do it, but nothing beyond that. He couldn't have cared less about American art.

COOLIDGE: Your senior thesis was on what topic?

SMITH: Gothic revival churches in New England and New York. But the tale that hangs thereby was that I wanted to write on the aesthetics of the design of automobiles,



starting with the horseless buggy right up to the quite wonderful design-- I mean, the motors of the thirties are still models of their kind. The department refused to accept it as a topic, so I got into this other one.

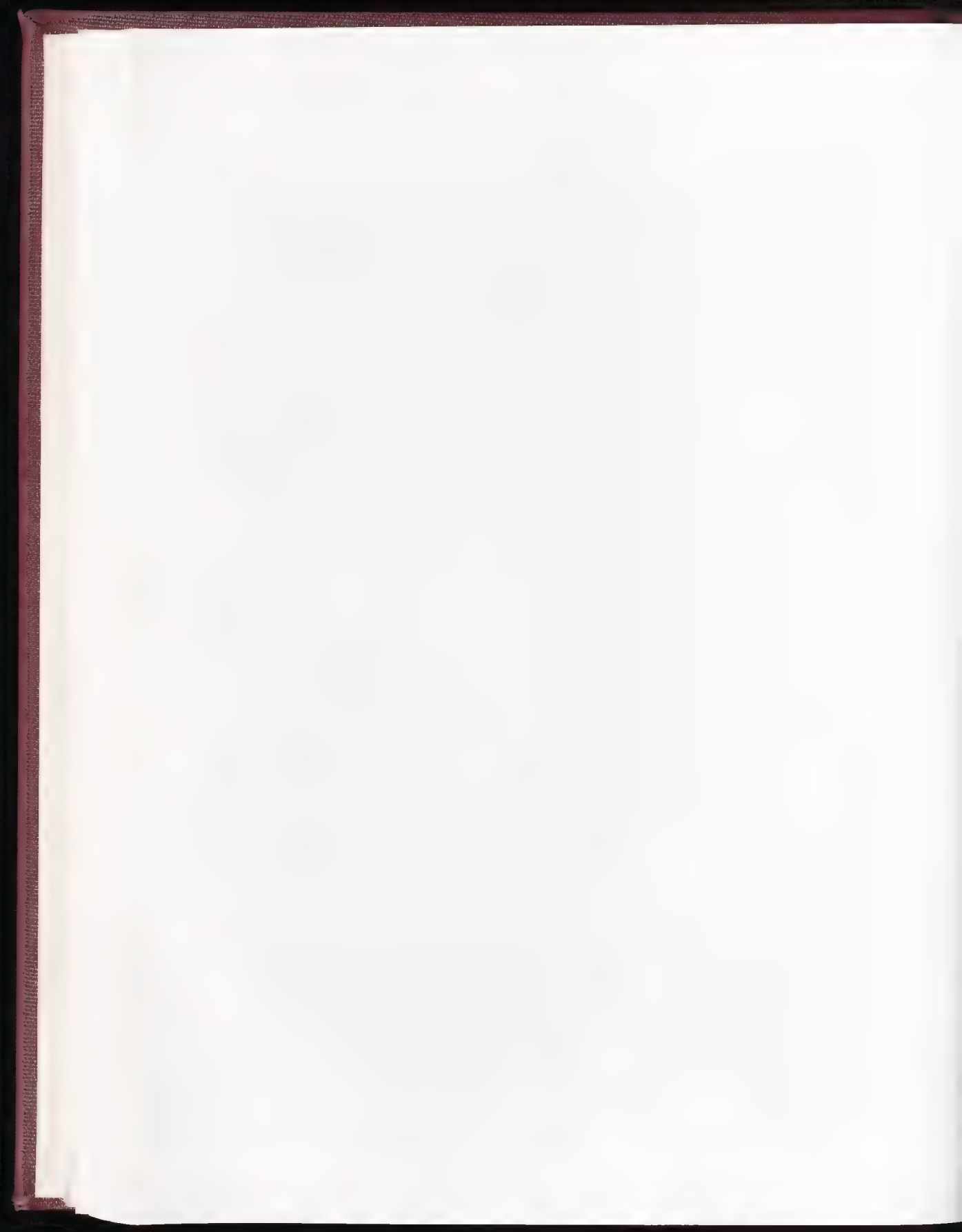
SMITH: Was there anybody in the department who was competent on American art and architecture?

COOLIDGE: Kenneth Conant knew architecture thoroughly, and Rowland came to know--and I suspect did then--a great deal about American painting. Indeed, I think he invented nineteenth-century luminism. The people who are experts on it today say they learned it from his course. He introduced them to it, and he may have had it then. Fred Deknatel and others could have read the thing, but they were juniors. I don't think they had tenure, and the people with tenure said, "Oh, this isn't art." And the juniors weren't in a position. Why should they go to bat for something like this? So that fell through.

SMITH: But you did do your senior thesis on American Gothic?

COOLIDGE: Yes.

SMITH: Particularly when I think of the connection to Mill and Mansion: [A Study of Architecture and Society in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1820-1865], both topics are perfect 1930s New Deal era studies in the sense of the turning away from Europe, turning inward, the study of



indigenous, perhaps vernacular, topics. Maybe that's too simplistic a presentation.

COOLIDGE: The first time I went to Europe was at the age of nine, and I remember going on a trip with my sisters, two of my sisters, to look at some cathedrals without our parents. And certainly-- Because I can remember the impact of Worcester Cathedral, for instance, which I've never seen since. At this point I got or-- It's like designing the interior of Memorial Hall [Harvard University]. I cared very much about Gothic art and Gothic interiors, and this was why I turned to that.

TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE TWO

APRIL 8, 1991

COOLIDGE: While I'm at it, at NYU-- I'm jumping to Mill and Mansion now, but it's not unrelated. The M.A. thesis took more than twice as long. The Harvard M.A. was one year, and there was no thesis. New York University, you took two years of courses and a thesis. But a time came when I had to have a thesis. The first reaction to NYU was to be overwhelmed by the faculty--a lasting reaction--but here I had to produce a thesis. And the only subject I'd ever done anything serious with was American architecture, so that was indicated as the subject of my thesis. This was a way of proving myself in some fashion, and that was the best thing I'd done to the day.

A teaching fellow in economics named Robert Keen Lamb was a friend of my parents, and I met him one weekend. He came for a visit to the parents' house in North Haven [Maine], and I got to know him. And indeed, he was one of the people who helped me my sophomore year. When I was thinking about my M.A. thesis, I felt that Gothic revival was a terribly narrow way of approaching American architecture. I mean, the best people who practice it also practice other things, so that you weren't getting at the whole of an architect. Even



within the subject itself, it was damned elitist. I had a feeling--two years later or three years later--that this was not the way to get into American architecture. I wondered about getting a community as a way to get into it, see all the architecture and how it fitted together. I went to see Bob Lamb, who was still at Harvard--I came back for Christmas vacation or something. He was working, as an economist, on Fall River and/or New Bedford [Massachusetts], and he told me how fascinating it was and, "Why don't you think about the architecture of one of these towns?"

Well, at this point we had a one-year-old daughter [Mary Coolidge Warren], and we had the problem of the summer. My brother has a camp at Squam Lake [New Hampshire] and lent us the camp. I thought, "This is the time to begin on my thesis," and I began with Manchester [New Hampshire], which was not too far away, the only city, and an industrial city. The moment you got into studying Manchester it was obvious that the thing to study was Lowell [Massachusetts]. So that that is the chain. It is of the thirties, but it is not because I was thinking on a New Deal line, so to speak. It was that sequence of reactions that brought it about.

SMITH: Your senior thesis on automobile design, were you interested in it because that sort of design work was



appealing to you as someone who is thinking of becoming a designer, an architectural designer? Were you also thinking of automobile design as something you would want to do?

COOLIDGE: No, I thought of it almost wholly as a visual field, these wonderful objects that nobody had sat down and studied. How did it happen? I knew I knew nothing about it, but here was something I knew nothing about and it seemed to me absolutely wonderful at the end. Why not find out? It was a way of finding out about something that I found exciting, and that was all.

SMITH: Okay.

COOLIDGE: I still feel somewhat the same way, but I've never pursued it.

SMITH: Let me ask you-- You were an advocate or you were interested in modern architecture, modern art. Were you involved with the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art?

COOLIDGE: Indeed. You know about the background of that, and when Lincoln Kirstein graduated, they passed it on to two juniors, Perry [T.] Rathbone and Otto Wittmanⁿ. Does Otto Wittmanⁿ mean anything to you?

SMITH: The name doesn't ring a bell. No, I'm sorry.

COOLIDGE: He is obviously Perry Rathbone's age.

There's only one other person of his generation that was as good a museum man. The two of them, he and Dan



[Daniel C.] Rich, were the best museum men--and that is higher than Perry Rathbone--of their generation. That's what he became. A whole professional life running the Toledo Museum [of Art], has retired and is now a major active, obviously a senior, adviser to the [J. Paul] Getty [Trust]. So he continues active, on a salary, and so on.

They took on the Society of Contemporary Art and came to see me in the spring of my sophomore year and asked if I would take it on from then. Who should I go and consult with but Bob Lamb, and I remember him saying, "Maybe that would be a good idea for you. Maybe that is a way that you can get out of your depression." He didn't put it this bluntly, but that was what he was saying. I found somebody to join me in it whose name I can look up, but I can't retain it. I'm having a terrible-- I'm having a problem with names, obviously. In any case, we took it on. Neither of us knew beans about modern painting, and I was working like hell to find out.

We put on one show which was either contemporary art owned by students or contemporary art executed by students. I guess it was contemporary art owned by students. Now, the whole society was based on funds that were raised, and an important first step was the letter



appealing for funds. We worked hard, and we drafted a letter. We mailed that letter on a Friday night or a Friday afternoon. You can look up the details accurately. But Saturday [Franklin D.] Roosevelt closed the banks, and that was the end of the Society of Contemporary Art. We got no replies. We knew we'd get no replies. We knew we couldn't go around to individual rich people and get them to give gifts in time to keep it going, or didn't think we could. So there was provision in the bylaws for what was to happen to the property if it was ever closed, and we simply closed it. Up to that point, I had gone to shows, but Perry and Otto hadn't done anything as remarkable with it as their predecessors.

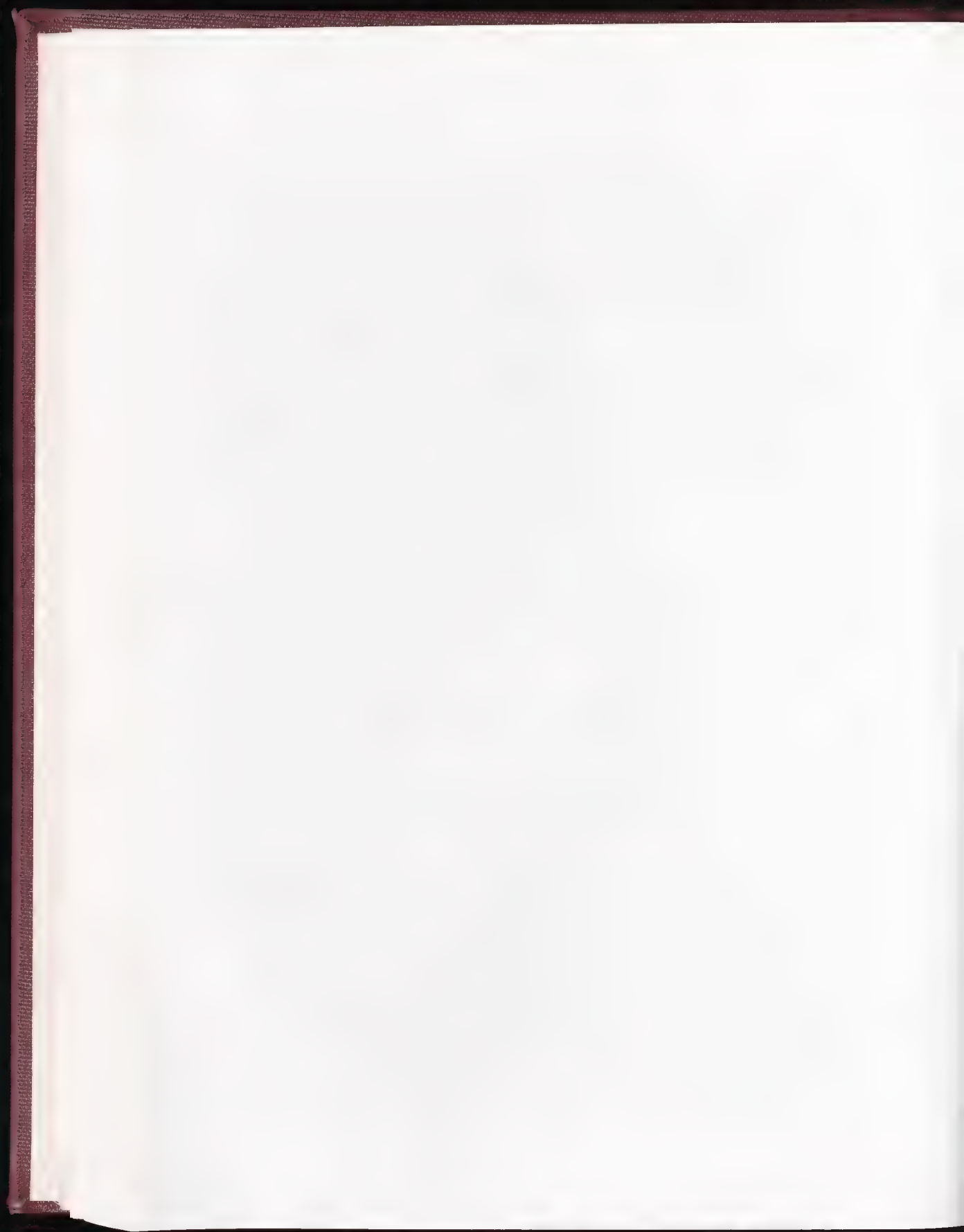
SMITH: Then the society was reactivated later?

COOLIDGE: It's fuzzy.

SMITH: The [Boston] Institute of Contemporary Art is not a successor?

COOLIDGE: No. There was a successor, but it was wholly different. One thing, it's a Boston institution. This was Cambridge. Or possibly New England.

SMITH: You graduated, and then you had to decide what you were going to do. How did you decide that you would then go to Columbia [University] to study architecture, and what were the options that you faced? Did you want



to get out of Cambridge?

COOLIDGE: In the [Mortimer] Adler years, when I was a sophomore, I'd decided the hundred best books program seemed the most lively thing and how about transferring to [University of] Chicago. That didn't arise, of course, when I was going to be an architect. When I was deciding about architecture, it was perfectly obvious that one went to Columbia. They had a lively dean, Joseph Hudnut, and they were the only school that was wedded to the International style--that was it.

There was a wonderful librarian in the Harvard architectural school [Ruth Cook], as it then was, and I remember going to call on her. She politely said to me--and I knew her well--"What are your plans for next year?" I said, "I'm going to architectural school. I'm going to Columbia. They have a wonderful dean and are dedicated to modern architecture." She said, "Hmmm. You may want to rethink your plans." I didn't pay any attention to that. Why should I rethink my plans? And that was that! *
[I was enamored of modern architecture, and Columbia, under the leadership of Dean Joseph Hudnut, was the only school in the country dedicated to the International style. But early that year George Edgell, who had taught

* Dr. Coolidge added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.



me in the introductory history of art survey, resigned as dean of the Harvard architectural school to become director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Harvard immediately started looking for a dean to replace him. After some months they offered the job to Dean Hudnut, and he accepted. The school staff were informed before the new appointment was made to the public. Hence Ruth Cook wondered whether I might wish to stay at Harvard now that it would have Hudnut as dean. When I heard the news, I talked things over with Polly Welch; we were engaged. We figured that Hudnut would be so engaged transforming the school that during the next three years I wouldn't get a very good education at Harvard. If we tried Columbia and missed the boat, we could transfer to somewhere else. So we got married in May and moved to New York. Our daughter was born the following March.]

SMITH: In terms of the International style, or the architects that are associated with the International style, whose work did you feel closest to at that time?

COOLIDGE: Let me answer that, but it is important to point out one thing. American colonial churches of the nineteenth century, American Gothic revival churches, the person who knew this field was Henry-Russell Hitchcock. I wrote Henry-Russell Hitchcock. I went to see Henry-



Russell Hitchcock, and he advised me on my thesis. He became a friend in connection with that, and of course was enormously involved in the International style. I don't remember discussing this with Russell at the time, but I also can't imagine that I didn't, because we became good friends very quickly. Now, you asked me a question about the International style.

SMITH: Actually, what I want to get at is your aesthetic inclinations within the modern movement. Which architects you felt aesthetically closest to.

COOLIDGE: Well, I was taken in by the [Philip] Johnson/Hitchcock propaganda, so that it was [Ludwig] Mies [van der Rohe] and Le Corbusier and [Walter] Gropius. Open-minded about Frank Lloyd Wright--I'd never seen any. I went to dig at Cluny the summer of my freshman year, but I'd never been to Europe after that. So I knew the International style only from pictures.

SMITH: You'd never seen the Villa Savoy?

COOLIDGE: No. Still haven't, and I'm dying to get there. That was what I was set on, fundamentally, on the recommendation that they had given. It was a while before we could follow this up, and particularly as the year at Columbia ended professional concern with contemporary art. It didn't end my interest in it, but there were other things that had to be done the moment I



got out of architecture.

SMITH: Well, what were the factors that led you to shift from the study of architectural practice to the study of art history as a profession.

COOLIDGE: I had devoted myself to architecture since the age of nine. It was a shock to get into an architectural school and find that while I got an A in architectural design, it was clear to me that I got an A because I sweated it out. I was surrounded by kids for whom this was the natural result of their inclinations. The first thing that happened-- I sort of always knew-- I discovered-- We had a course in which you had to make sketches and hand in a notebook with the sketches every week. We had to go out and draw buildings. I just disliked this intensely. I had no interest in drawing--I still don't have--but here I was. And I must have been one of the most dedicated people, but I didn't have the talent. Architecture to me is designing buildings. I knew I could have earned my living by going into a firm and being the guy who joined the country club and got commissions. Or I could learn to be the guy who wrote out specifications. But that wasn't architecture. Architecture to me was designing buildings. When I saw myself against these other people who had come up easily, for whom this was a natural expression, to design houses--



There it flowed. That was it. And the situation was such that-- Well, it's rather like today. The first lecture we went to in one of my courses was the professor saying, "You realize that only one out of every seven of you is going to be an architect."

I've never regretted that side of me, because I think it's a lousy profession. In the sense that teaching is a terribly good profession, architecture is a lousy profession. Not in terms of earning, but the fact that you either have no work to do and are firing trusted draftsmen, or else you've got more work to do and you're giving incompetent people more responsibility than they are equipped to handle. Seems to be very little in between.

It was perfectly clear that I could do it, but it was not going to be-- There's hard work and hard work. The hard work that comes out of some conviction or vision of your own and carrying it out is one thing. The hard work that is simply devoted to solving a problem that is handed to you-- Which is after all any building. "Design me a house, and this here is my plot of land." If that doesn't spur a vision, then at least this was what I came to realize.

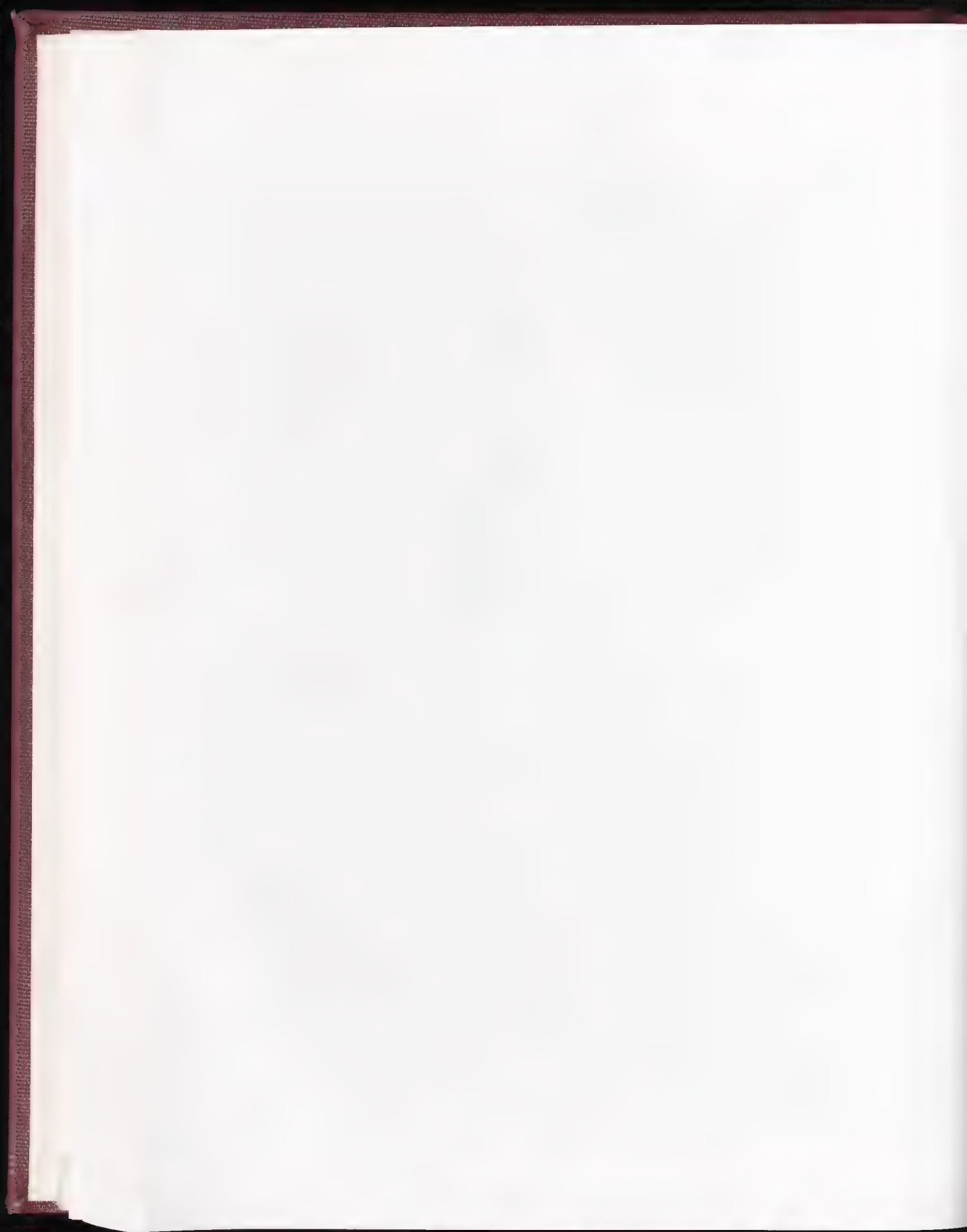
SMITH: So then NYU was in the neighborhood. How did you choose to go to the Institute [of Fine Arts]?



COOLIDGE: I'm a brother-in-law of Walter Whitehill. And Walter Whitehill, whom you probably don't know, was a remarkable local figure. He was at the end of his life called "Mr. Boston," in the sense that he ran the Boston Athenaeum, he was the librarian at the Boston Athenaeum. He knew everybody, he knew all the histories of everybody, and he got an enormous amount of things done. Quincy Market, you know, well, there's a plaque to him, because the person who actually brought everybody together and got that done was Walter. That was the kind of person he was. He got his Ph.D. at the University of London working on Spanish art. The other American working on Spanish art was Walter Cook, and he knew about the Institute of Fine Arts because he'd kept in touch. Walter Whitehill was a man who kept in touch with everybody he ever knew. I won't say "kept in touch," but he knew what had happened to. He knew what Walter Cook was doing. He said, "That's the only place to go." He was right. He was also discriminating at that kind of level.

SMITH: So you had made the decision that you wanted to study art history, but you then were considering where to go.

COOLIDGE: Yeah. These things may have been the same weekend, as it were. I knew I wasn't going to go back to



music. She had been a paid performer.

SMITH: What instrument?

COOLIDGE: She sang.

SMITH: Oh, she sang.

COOLIDGE: I thought she played piano nicely, but she wasn't a pro. She was a pro singer and teacher of singing. Then we kept in touch our junior year and got engaged senior year. The only thing that was unusual was that her father had angina and at that point was the oldest survivor from angina. We were to be married in May; in the middle of April he dropped dead. We went ahead, and my parents very sweetly said that we could be married from their house. So we were married actually in Lowell House, in their garden. Her mother couldn't carry on with anything. Blessedly, her mother's only relations insisted that the marriage should go forward. It was terribly nice. She [Polly] was a very alone person in a number of instances; she was a very lonely child and so forth. If they had said no, that would have been very difficult for her. So we were married. Then we went abroad, and then to Columbia architectural school. Then one of the things that was obvious at once was that I had to know German, so I guess the second summer I came to the Harvard summer school and took intensive German. My mother-in-law had a house outside of Newburyport

[Massachusetts], and we, I guess, went there. I went to the Harvard summer school in the summer for two years.

Yes, that was it. I studied German the first year.

SMITH: And you had a child. Your eldest child was born--

COOLIDGE: We were married in May, and she was born in April.

SMITH: It will be a theme that we'll continue to come back to, your family life.

COOLIDGE: Sure.

SMITH: I'd like to ask you about religion. You mentioned your mother [Theresa Reynolds Coolidge] was very religious. What denomination were you raised in?

COOLIDGE: Mother was a passionate Episcopalian. Father [Julian Lowell Coolidge] was born Unitarian, King's Chapel, and actually became senior warden of King's Chapel. But three Sundays out of four he went to Christ Church, Cambridge, with mother and the fourth he went to King's Chapel. [laughter] So he was never a complete-- He was really a Unitarian, though he practiced in the Episcopal church. After Groton [School], there was no question of religion for me. I had a little religious feeling when I was in school in England, I can remember that, but Groton killed anything of that sort.

SMITH: Because it was being rigidly enforced from above,



or--?

COOLIDGE: Oh, yes, but also it was so artificial. All the standard things, nothing particularly. Also because it was so-- Mother had hoped that I would be a missionary, and when I was nine or ten, shall we say this was indicated. And while she didn't inflict it on me, I know to the day of her death that was her hope. Mother was hard to take in some senses, not seriously, but she was enormously enthusiastic and energetic and the kind of mother who because of those things could embarrass you at school. This led to a total rejection of anything that was close to her.

Father I saw very little, but he made a point of being visible. I went to see Father. He had a habit, which was a very nice one, of spending every Sunday afternoon with his children, so I went and saw him then. But also, as I was growing up, architecture was something that interested him. Okay, if I wanted a T square and triangle, I would tell him about it, and he would produce them for me. I can remember, for my twelfth birthday, there was-- I don't know if you know A History of Architecture by Banister Fletcher, as it's known. It's a British book with, oh, like a thousand illustrations. I was asked what I wanted for Christmas, and I said that I wanted that. Father went out and priced it, and it came

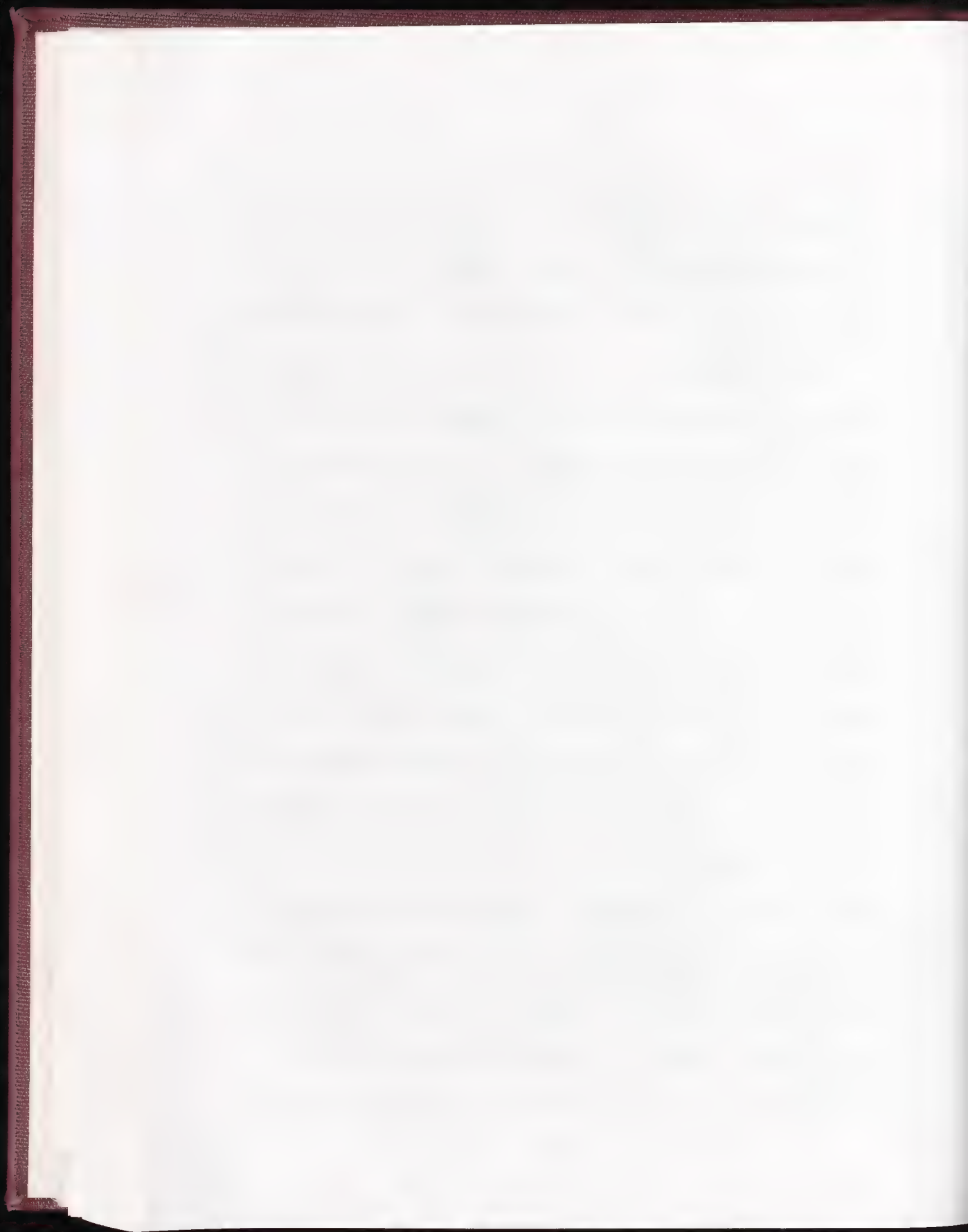


to twelve dollars. He came home and said to me he was a professor and he had seven children--was I sure that I really wanted that? And I said, "Yes." Well, I was right. It was the book I really wanted. I still consult it. There it is.

But I rejected religion. Oh, it was forced on you in Groton. There was no sense of piety; there was no taste. There was nothing except this foreign thing that was forced on you, and it was just part of something that I completely rejected. And Mother, incidentally, was a pillar of the WCTU [Women's Christian Temperance Union]. Late in life, there was an unspoken agreement! When we stayed with my parents in later life, I always went to church with Mother. When Mother and Father came to dinner with us, we had cocktails. Father didn't have cocktails, but Father did drink wine. Mother would have none of this. This trade-off: "This is what I enjoy and believe in." "That's what you enjoy and believe in." No, it never came up.

SMITH: What about--this is a complete shift in subject--the effect of the Depression on you or your family? Was there any? Or life at Harvard? You mentioned the example of the banks closing the day that you were trying to get money to keep the Society for Contemporary Arts.

COOLIDGE: No, we couldn't see any. Harvard must have



been affected. They have always been quite exceptionally bright at handling their endowment, and I imagine that pulled them through. The only thing that one was aware of was that--and this is one of those things Harvard doesn't admit--when I was in college, 66 percent, or as near it makes no difference, of Harvard students had some kind of financial assistance. That might be work. You know shelving books at the library would count as that. But only a third of their students fully paid their own way. In the Depression afterwards, Aunt Belle [Isabella Stewart Gardner]'s \$40,000 kept us going, literally, and for many years. There was two years' work at Vassar, but otherwise we nibbled into that.

SMITH: You didn't feel financial constraints affecting the decisions that you had to make at any point?

COOLIDGE: The man who married my first cousin, terribly nice man, worked on Wall Street. When we moved, he took over the investment of this money, and of course we didn't live within it. And I was worried as a Bostonian about dipping into capital. [laughter] The first point he made was that at the rate I was dipping into capital, he figured my capital would see me through eighty years! [laughter] He wasn't too worried about that. The second point was, what is your capital? Isn't education part of your capital? So we lived parsimoniously, but we didn't



hesitate to dip into capital. We didn't dip very far, but we didn't hesitate-- You know, I mean, summer spending with one parent or the other, that kind of thing.

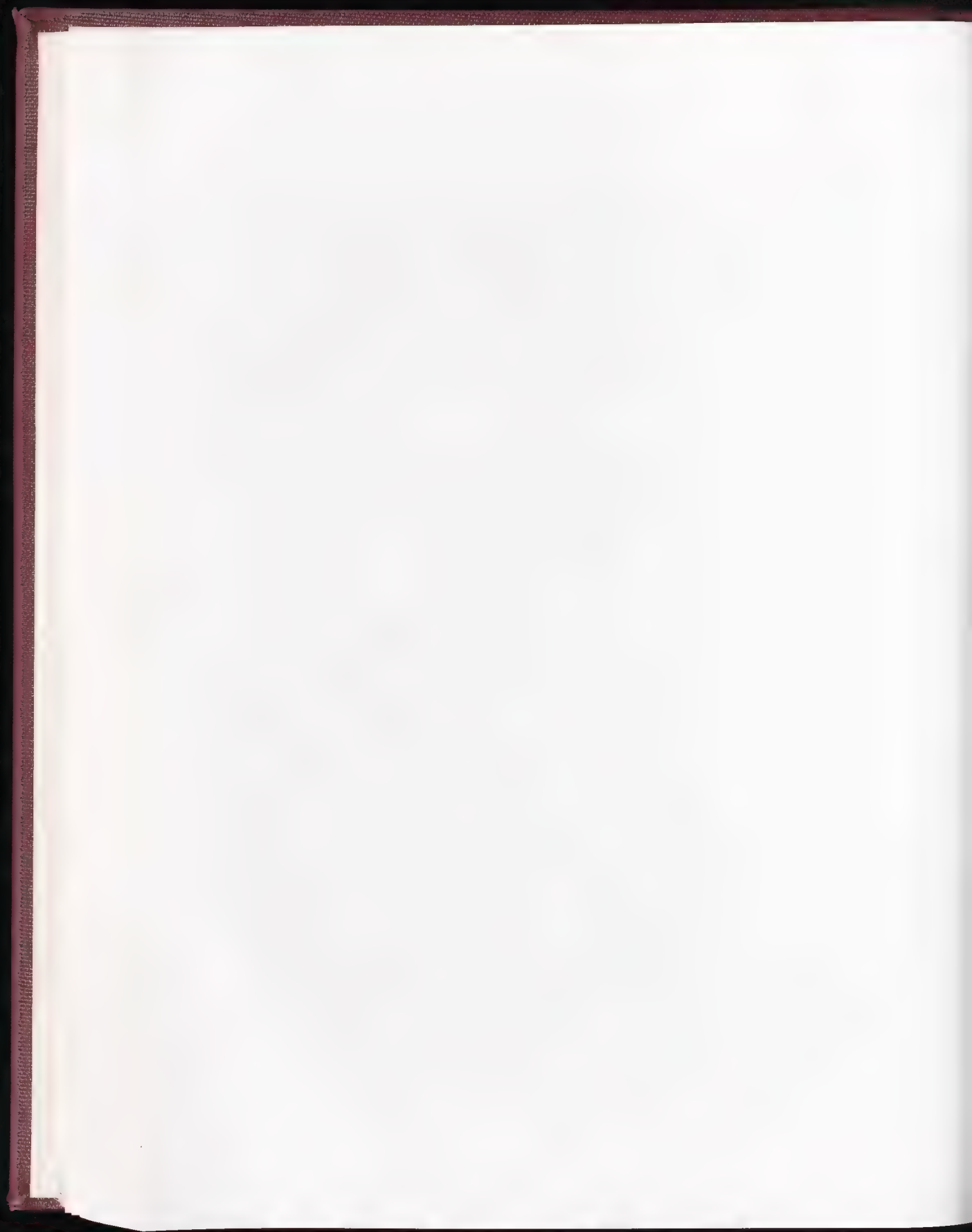
SMITH: Did you follow the international situation at all? You were obviously aware about Hitler and that, but when did you come to feel that we were going to go to war with Germany?

COOLIDGE: Well, I was astonished my freshman year to realize that you could subscribe to the New York Times. It was delivered that morning at Harvard. It wasn't delivered in Cambridge. I wrote them about that. I threatened to go to the trade commission, the U.S. trade commission, [laughter] because the Boston Globe and the Boston Herald had prevented it being-- That soon was changed, and it came to be delivered there. I've read the New York Times thoroughly since my freshman year, and then at NYU was in the midst of German refugees and was very aware of the whole situation there. So that I don't know-- I mean, I had serious concern about this from the early thirties on, but I don't know there was ever a dramatic moment in which my--

SMITH: For instance, I know George [A.] Kubler mentioned that he had been interested in French medieval, but his conviction that the war was going to happen--and he had

it fairly early on, having been in Germany when the Nazis took over--was one of the things that directed him to study New Mexico architecture. Because he was not confident that he would ever be able to complete the research work needed if he had a European subject. Did you have similar fears? I mean, for instance, in terms of the Vignola or--

COOLIDGE: Well, Mill and Mansion was published. If I needed to shift, I could always shift into that. This was always available, and I could make a career there if I had to. I've never lost interest in it. I mean, I'm still writing articles in it. For the Vignola, it was published before I'd seen the monuments. The professionals accepted the stuff that I'd written, and while this is no way to do it, they accepted it. It was published and so forth; one went along with it. Well, I don't know. You see, I'm not really a specialist in any field, and I never felt the desire to be. So if I could make a contribution, I did. And then if something came up and I had an idea that it interested me in an area, if I could make a contribution there, I did. So this never has really arisen, and I've gotten quite deep into areas where contributions didn't then carry much weight. At one point, I knew quite a lot about German baroque architecture, but I never found a way of getting into



that. It was I suppose, in a sense, like automobile design. I never pursued it.

SMITH: You mentioned you spent one summer studying German. Did you consider spending a summer in Europe?

COOLIDGE: Yes, indeed, we did that. I had one summer spent in Germany, one summer working with Kenneth Conant. I did a second version of the Gothic revival, which included the houses. Neither of these have been published. Then the summer working at Manchester, and then a summer in Germany.

SMITH: Which year were you in Germany?

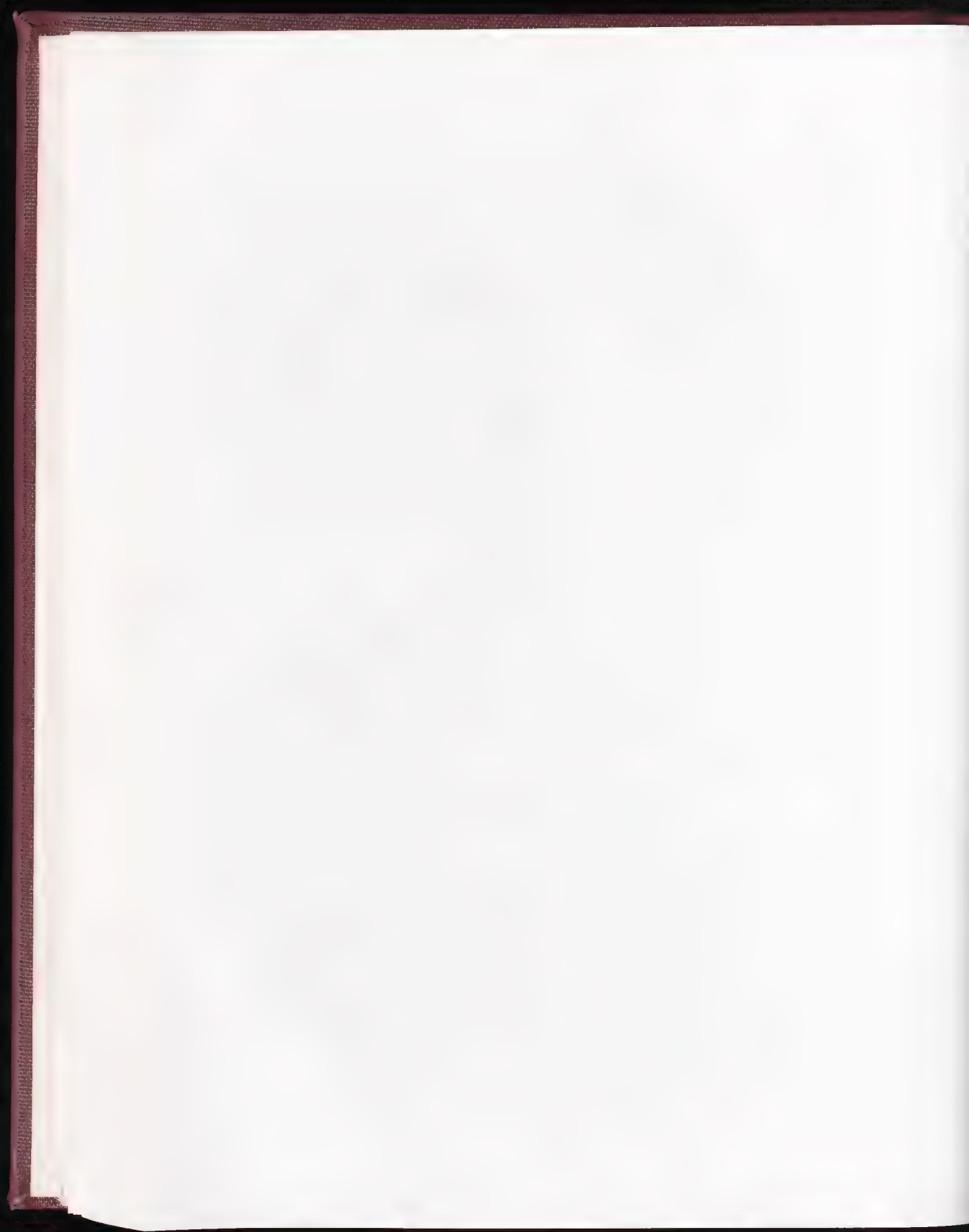
COOLIDGE: The year that Hitler moved into Austria, I think '38. That doesn't account for everything. No, there was a second-- Let's see, there were two summers at the Harvard summer school. Why, I must have had two summers in Europe.

SMITH: You had mentioned you went back to study with Conant at Cluny.

COOLIDGE: With Conant here. I don't know how many summers, and I have to work it out. I can sit down and do that between meetings rather than waste time doing it here.

SMITH: Did you go to Germany to attend art history lectures or to look at monuments or--?

COOLIDGE: Not art history lectures, but to learn the



language. Both of us wanted more experience with the language, and of course to see monuments. But it was essentially a language thing. Well, you really had to be able to read German, period.



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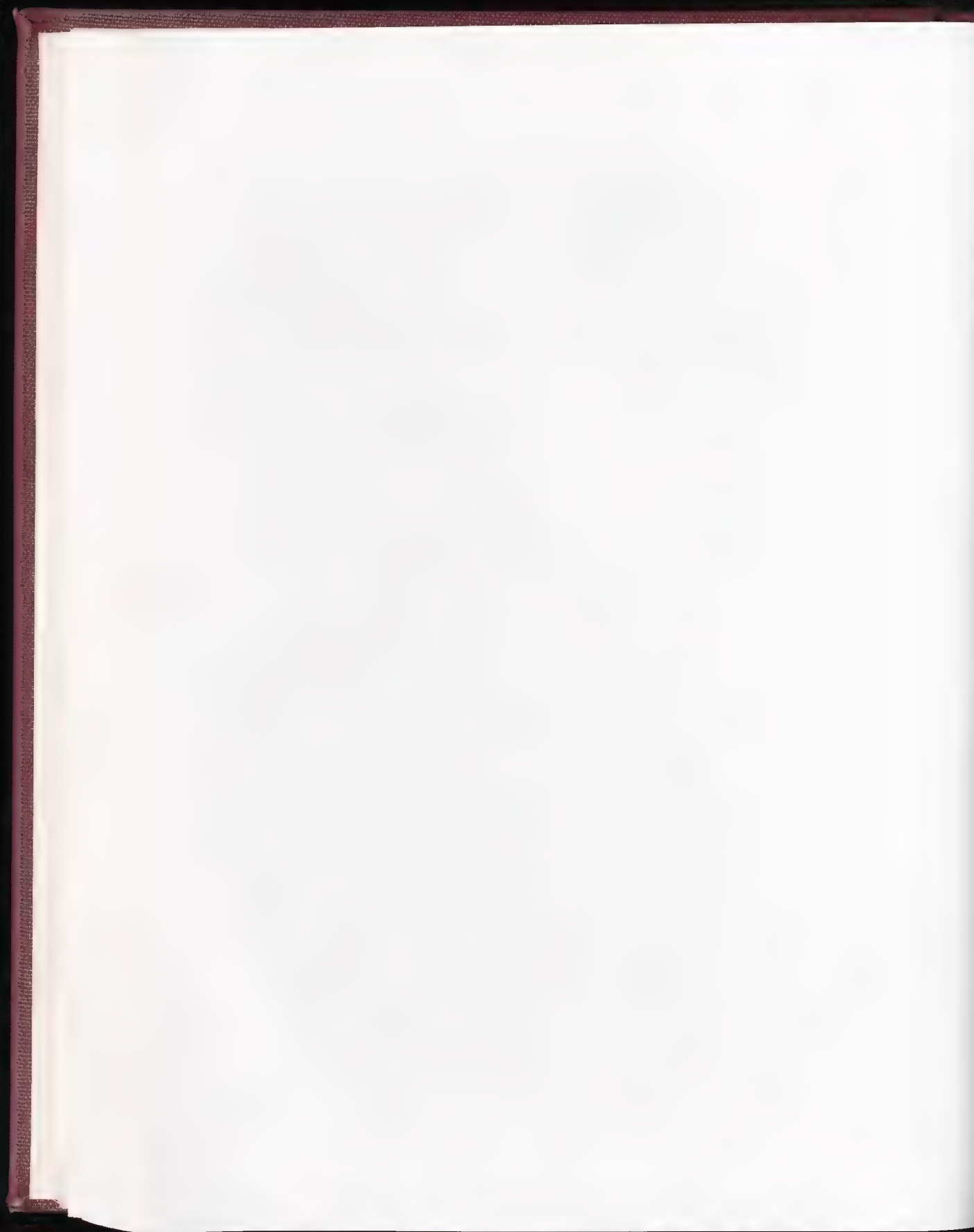
SMITH: I have a couple of follow-up questions. One was I forgot to ask you about your participation on the Advocate and the Critic.

COOLIDGE: I didn't know you knew that the Critic existed.

SMITH: We dig around.

COOLIDGE: I went out for the [Harvard] Crimson and had, apparently, the unusual thing that the first editorial I wrote--I went out for editorial--was published. Then I got bored with the thing, and the Crimson people told me that I didn't write anything much except about fine arts, so I quit. I can't literally remember my connection with the Advocate. I haven't thought of it in so long that it comes in astonishment that you ask that question.

Because I can only say, "Yes, I was," and I don't know how much. Clearly not much. The Critic I was one of the three founders of, and certainly there was no distinction among the three of us. I think we brought out two issues, and then it lapsed. God knows how we financed it. I had \$60 a month, which covered everything except my medical and my tuition. And that didn't leave you, even in them days, anything to find to contribute towards

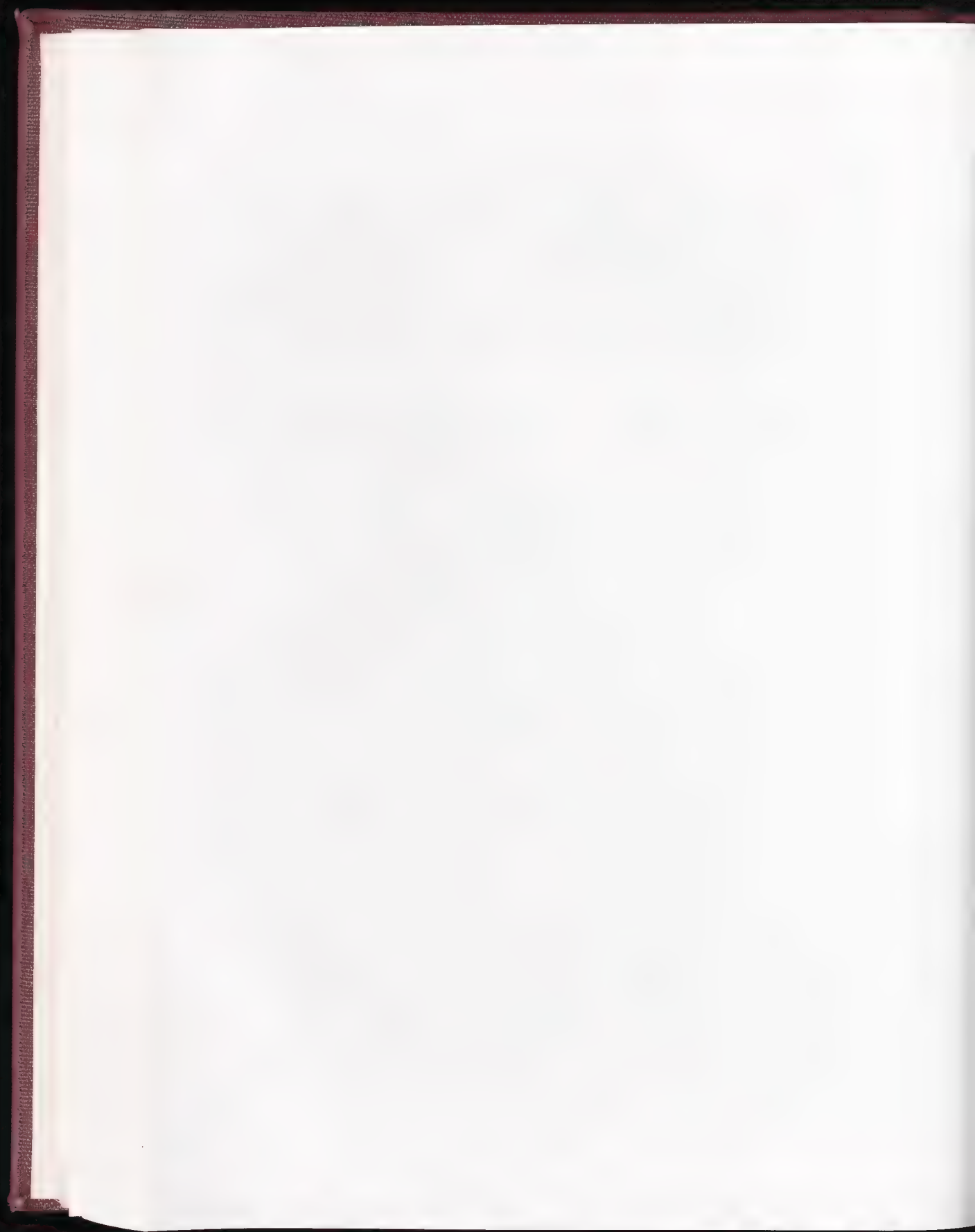


founding a magazine. But we did. Then it lapsed. Then there was some talk of reviving it, but it was by the other two, and I was aware that they were doing it without me. But nothing came of that. I was a little unhappy about that, but they remained close friends, so to speak.

SMITH: Was this intended as, shall we say, a modernist critique of the Harvard [University] educational system? Were you putting yourself in opposition in some way?

COOLIDGE: Modernist I wouldn't say. The other two members were George Haskins and Charles Charrington. Haskins became a lawyer. Charrington taught at Harvard. I won't put my hand in the fire whether it was history or sociology, because the two things merged in his mind. One of the things he knew a lot about was government regulation of railroads. Well, he was teaching undergraduates, and I can't tell you what department that would go into. Obviously, you can see it in government. Yes, he taught government.

What we had in common was an interest in social things and the social organization of Harvard. Certainly we were critical of the Harvard administration rather than the faculty--the way Harvard was organized, the administration in that sense, rather than in disagreeing with Lawrence Lowell per se. That would have been the



line, and we would obviously quickly get into educational questions in one way or another. Into the number of courses that you were required to take, this kind of thing. That's all I can remember. Except I remember its physical appearance.

SMITH: We had talked a little bit yesterday about F. O. [Frank Otto] Matthiessen, and I wanted to ask you about other faculty. I'm thinking particularly in the history area, where you may or may not have encountered them. Did you know Carl Becker?

COOLIDGE: No. The one man I remember, and remember well, is Charles Taylor, and I remain fond of him.

SMITH: You took courses with him?

COOLIDGE: I took courses with him, yes.

SMITH: No courses with Samuel Eliot Morrison?

COOLIDGE: No.

SMITH: Perry Miller?

COOLIDGE: I think not. I think I didn't take any courses with him. Since one of my closest friends, [Cesar L.] "Joe" Barber, was this sort of stellar member of our class there, the history and lit crowd knew me as a friend of Joe Barber's. As I say, I took courses with Matthiessen. I don't think I took one with Perry Miller, but he would have known me. He might not have remembered my name, but he certainly would have known me as a friend of Joe



Barber's. He might have known me by name, partly because he might have said, "Oh, yes, he's Julian [Lowell] Coolidge's son," something of that sort.

SMITH: When you came back after '47, '48, did you participate in--? There was an American civilization focus at Harvard--

COOLIDGE: No. Because at that point I think I was not an Americanist. I was an Americanist emeritus. I had thought of it as something that I might go back to someday, but it was not my primary interest. I may add one thing, since we're on a tangential subject. When I was offered the directorship of the Fogg [Art Museum], the only person I can remember consulting was Matthiessen. I think I announced to my parents that it had been offered me and that I was almost certainly going to accept so that they would have a chance to tell me why, you know, criticize or suggest. Matthiessen was a person whose advice I valued and whose attitude I valued.

SMITH: What did he tell you, do you recall?

COOLIDGE: Mostly that he wouldn't comment on that, that it's too personal a decision, and it's an important one. "I'm not going to tell you what to do," that kind of thing. He emphasized the seriousness of it, but was emphatic about a formalized disinterest in getting to know people too well.



SMITH: On his part.

COOLIDGE: On his part. He was not the type of person who if you should know them slightly would have an immediate reaction, knowing you slightly. And if this didn't fit into their--or did fit into their--vision of you, would spit it out. Matthiessen was anything but that. I don't think I knew him well enough to correctly anticipate between saying he was shy and saying he was reserved. I didn't know. I came to know after he died that he had good friends. I came to know a good friend of his, but I didn't at the time.

SMITH: I guess this is skipping, but since we're on Matthiessen-- He is, I mean in some ways, one of the more prominent victims of the McCarthy period at Harvard. I had wanted to ask you, as I'm asking everybody in this series, what the effect of the McCarthy period was on their institution, on Harvard, on the Fogg, and in terms of the faculty that one knew. Did you have regular enough contact with Matthiessen to sense the kinds of pressures that he was under that would lead to his committing suicide?

COOLIDGE: No. I was surprised at his suicide. Or shall I say I was initially shocked. But as I reflected upon it, it was certainly within understanding. He was not a person who reflected happiness in life. I mean, you



walked in with a smile, you commented on the weather. That wasn't Matthiessen. He operated on the level that one thinks of a Hebrew prophet operating on. I don't think that Elisha would have commented on the weather if you just met him, or the time of day, you know! Matthiessen would either resume a topic of conversation or pick up a topic of conversation or simply say politely, "Good morning," or whatever. So I'd certainly never thought of him as the type that would commit suicide, but I also realized that he was so inward that none of us, including Joe Barber, who was the person I knew best--I keep referring to him--really knew what was going on inside the man. Certainly I didn't know he was a homosexual when I was an undergraduate. He had no private life.

One knew that the English department was split. There were the people who represented the New Humanism, the Irving Babbitt kind of thing. These were the senior faculty, John Livingston Lowes and [George Lyman] Kittredge. Then there was the younger generation, who were contemporary-literature minded and of whom Matthiessen was the most conspicuous. You knew that split, and I think one would have been aware of that creating-- I haven't the vaguest idea what Matthiessen's political leanings were, but all of us were more or less



leftish. One assumed that he would have been, but I would have been surprised if he had been a card-carrying communist, because he wasn't the kind of man who would join any organization.

SMITH: Okay, so you said, "All of us were more or less leftish." That includes you, I guess.

COOLIDGE: Oh, yes.

SMITH: So how would you define your political ideologies in the mid-1930s?

SMITH: Well, as a freshman, I had a good friend who was a card-carrying communist. I certainly entirely agreed with him. And I can remember that there was a strike of miners in Kentucky my freshman year that made a stir. I can't remember the details, and I've never seen it referred to since. This friend went down, and I very seriously had talked of going with him, or thought of going afterwards. In any case, I felt a little that I hadn't lived up to my point of view. If this was the thing that he did, I should have done that.

My point of view, which-- Well. You start in at Groton: that there could be conflicts in society simply didn't arise. You came here, and my freshman year I can remember reading The Communist Manifesto and dipping into Das Kapital. This was like Picasso. It was a discovery in a completely different world, and one temperamentally--



Again, I can't tell you how much of this is background to my parents, who were thoroughly traditional, but not aggressively so. I mean, they certainly voted straight Republican, but they were not John Birch [Society] in any sense at all. But I was reacting against that in every way, including religion. I thought of myself as leftist. I was not bewitched by communism, but on the whole, thought it was the most plausible-looking alternative, probably was the best way around. But I was not convinced enough to join it.

SMITH: Then you were in New York from '36 on. Were you familiar with the Partisan Review circle? Did you go to their functions?

COOLIDGE: No. I knew the magazine, and I think I may have subscribed once. When we got to New York, a very different way of life, simply because having had what seemed to me in terms of my New York University [NYU] professors a lousy education, I was a workaholic at art history. My wife [Polly Welch Coolidge] is not particularly-- Well, she has been registered as Republican. She's independent middle, but she's had none of my positive left-wing prejudices.

SMITH: What about within the context of art history? Did you admire [Meyer] Schapiro's work? Any significance to you at that time?



COOLIDGE: As an undergraduate, no, because the department, or the members I knew, had no contact with him. He would have been known to [Arthur] Kingsley Porter as a Romanesque scholar of sculpture, and I took Porter's course on sculpture. Though I knew Porter because he was a neighbor down the street, and I'd known him since I was a child, a small child. But Porter was neutral politically and would have regarded this as he would have, well, regarded Schapiro's religion. Was he an Orthodox Jew or a liberated Jew, you know--didn't make much difference. It wasn't substantially of any interest. When I became a graduate student, I knew his work as an art historian and admired it greatly. I knew his left-wing position, and that was, if anything, favorable, because it showed he wasn't stuck in any sense in the past. But since I by that time no longer took communism seriously as a menace to American society, what an individual felt about it-- If they felt it was the thing for America to become, all right, that was their point of view.

In the same way I did not go to Spain. A classmate of mine as a freshman, whom I knew well because my sport was wrestling-- We had compulsory sports. As a freshman, one of the people I wrestled with in my class went to the Spanish civil war. I wouldn't have considered doing



that. Well, it just seemed to me it was not America's business to get involved, and I wasn't convinced enough. I was in favor, of course, of the [Spanish] republicans. Emotionally I wasn't convinced about them as an effective force, and it seemed to me to go to a foreign country and fight when they were in serious danger of losing was sacrificing too much of your own life for something that wouldn't benefit them, the Spaniards, very much. But again, the people one knew were leftist. And very definitely at that time, though I knew a lot of people--I was very gregarious my freshman year--I didn't pretend that the people I knew were the whole of my class.

SMITH: That was a large class.

COOLIDGE: Yes, a thousand.

SMITH: You mentioned yesterday that your brother-in-law, Walter Whitehill, recommended that you go [to the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University], and his connection was through Walter Cook. Before you enrolled, did you go to meet with Professor Cook?

COOLIDGE: Indeed I did. I didn't understand what I was getting into, but I will describe what I was getting into, because it will come up later on. They were in the Institute headquarters in a ground-floor apartment on approximately Eighty-second Street and-- Well, might have been Eighty-third, or -fourth or -first. But I think it



was Eighty-second or Eighty-third. I think it was Eighty-third, between Fifth [Avenue] and Madison [Avenue], an old limestone mansion that had been broken up. They had the ground-floor apartment, or part of it, and this consisted of four rooms. There was what had been the living room, which was about the width of this room and perhaps eight feet longer. It might be a little less than the width of this room.

SMITH: So maybe fifteen by twenty-five feet.

COOLIDGE: That sort of figure. Along one wall were the window and one narrow end, and two doors at the opposite corner of the same narrow end. And along the wall with the window, a continuous bench top, table-top height, strangely enough with no legs beneath it--it must have had sloping things underneath. That was the room for everybody. There were six chairs perhaps along that bench, and those were the professors' offices. That was where the professors worked. The two doors in the corner, one of them led into an office which was an area approximately the size of this room. Not a tiny office, but small as an office. Well, from here to here and the two walls, with a seat for Walter Cook behind a desk. As I remember it, he didn't have a window. There was a bathroom with an old-fashioned bathtub, and in the bathtub were the lantern slides that the Institute itself



owned.

I went to see Walter Cook in this serious but underprivileged environment. I was a little surprised at how underprivileged it was. I sat at a chair opposite him at the desk and talked about getting a Ph.D. He was very straightforward, very realistic. Clearly I would have to learn German, which I didn't know, which I didn't know that I would have to learn. It didn't frighten me, but this was new. He said it would take five years, and that was that. This was all new information, since it had never crossed my mind when I was at Harvard I might go into graduate work, to being a professor. I knew nothing about how long it would take. Five years was not unreasonable. If I had been a lawyer, it would have been three. If I had been a medicine doctor, it would have been six or seven. Five was perfectly fair. I signed up and plunged in.

I don't think I had known the names of any of the professors. I was close to Walter Whitehill, and I'm sure I asked his advice. I took a course with [Erwin] Panofsky, who was the leading name. I took a course with Karl Lehmann in some aspect of ancient art, I think because the only thing I knew about ancient art was what I learned in the half of the survey [at Harvard] that was devoted to ancient art. I can't remember who else I took



a course with. Certainly not with Walter Cook. I don't remember whether I took a seminar my first year or not. The normal thing was to take four courses.

SMITH: A year or a semester?

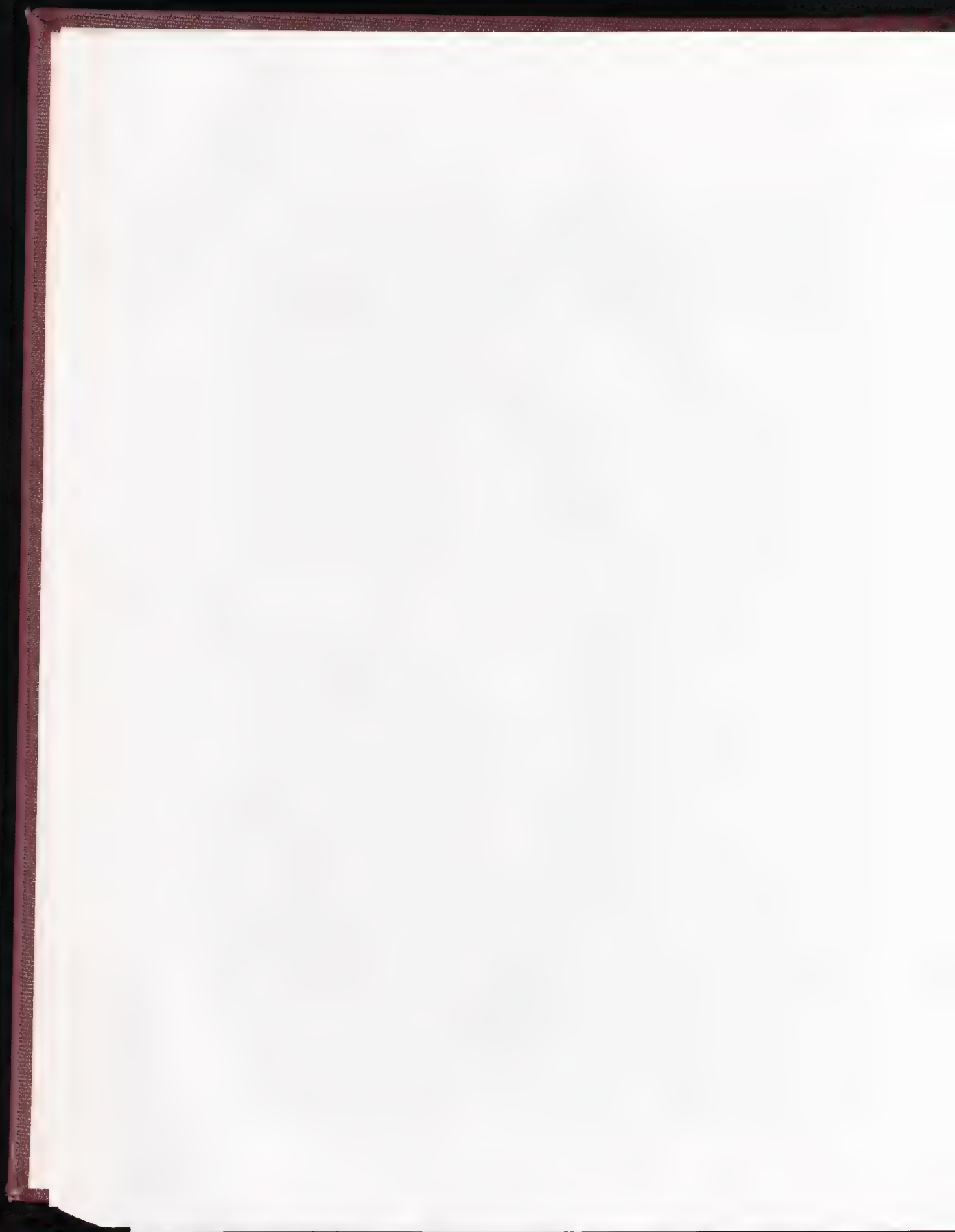
COOLIDGE: A semester, and the courses were all what we call half courses, semester courses. There weren't any full courses. In four years of taking courses, though a number of times I signed up for four, I never managed to complete more than three. The work was inconceivably more than I had expected. I didn't resent it, but it was just like going to medical school or law school. It was very different from going to college. There it was. It soon was evident at the end of my first year that I was not going to get through by five years. Nobody was getting through by five years. You had, theoretically, two years to get your courses done, but everybody else took three, so likely I would take three. Some people came there knowing German and Italian as well as French. I only knew French, and I knew immediately working with the Germans that I'd have to get a reading knowledge of German and Italian. I waited on German until I went to summer school my first summer, and for Italian I got tutoring from the wife of Alfred Barr, who was an Italian. I never took anything formal in Italian. The Barrs were part of our social circle in New York. It was



the first exciting education, it was the first good education I'd had since my school in England. My school in England was the only place in which the teaching was comparable to NYU. This was a wholly new experience for me.

SMITH: I guess we can't discuss all the classes you took. Maybe we can take a few of the teachers and discuss in detail a class you took, the teacher's approach, the kind of competencies they demanded, and then perhaps if you could, how their example may or may not have influenced your own work as a teacher.

COOLIDGE: Let me begin with the obvious, which was Panofsky. The first semester I took was on Roman baroque, and it was a series of lectures on that subject, which I don't think would have been taught as a course at any other art department in the country at that time. The most you could have gotten at Harvard would have been a course on baroque art or a course on baroque painting. But to take one city and take all the arts, no, that would not have happened. One had to write a paper for that course, and I did this because I had an affinity for baroque art. I hadn't realized how deep that affinity went. But it was there. Therefore Panofsky was the person which you were going to go for anyway, and those things came together. The question of writing a paper:



I had learned from my honors thesis that it was desirable to work with the monuments. My thesis was on the spires of American colonial churches and their baroque or not baroque character.

SMITH: So this was the paper you wrote for--

COOLIDGE: For Panofsky. It was a course paper in this course.

SMITH: On the Roman baroque. So he did not insist that you write a paper on Rome.

COOLIDGE: No. The course was conceived as an introduction to the baroque, and the way he introduced you to the baroque was a course that specialized in one aspect of the baroque. That's the kind of thinking that he adopted. He was not interested in stylistic problems per se. It wouldn't have interested him to contrast French baroque and Italian baroque and German baroque. Here was a body of material that Americans knew very little about that he liked, and he gave a course on this material. He lectured well. I liked it so well that I asked Polly to come, and she came towards the end of the course. He spoke with a German accent to such a degree that she couldn't understand what he was saying. I had gotten used to it. I think I am perhaps better at understanding just speaking. I've noticed on the TV that I can hear things when we are listening to a program



together better than she. So I'm not saying I have sharp ears, but maybe more that she has blunt. One did learn a German-American accent very quickly.

SMITH: At this school, yes.

COOLIDGE: At this school. I could understand, and this was just marvelous. All these courses had two obligations. You had a final exam, and in Panofsky's case it was a slide test. A one-hour slide test.

SMITH: How many slides would he expect that there would be?

COOLIDGE: Twenty for three minutes each, something like that.

SMITH: So it didn't go much beyond identification of the monument, then?

COOLIDGE: No, because the other thing you did was the paper. It was reported to me afterwards by somebody who knew that Panofsky said, "Not only did he [Coolidge] get all the slides exactly right, but he wrote an excellent paper too." It's a flat conceited statement I wouldn't normally want to make, but it does show you things about him and about me. I certainly would never have heard it. Some, oh, shall we say a very senior graduate student overheard Panofsky saying that to another professor about a new student and maybe a year later passed that along to me. That was the kind of situation you were up against,



that they recognized, sure, someone who had training in the university and in fine arts, that he probably couldn't read more than one foreign language, and when he picked the choice of a subject, that he either didn't care about seeing the originals or hadn't had a chance of seeing the originals, and so forth. They adjusted their courses, they adjusted their standards, the education of the students they had, but expected the highest that the student could put out on that.

There were half a dozen or more full-time professors, and then a certain number of people who would be teaching or active in other institutions. We didn't have the directress of the Morgan Library, but we might have. You might have somebody teaching in Columbia [University] who came and gave a half course. The student body consisted of New Yorkers who wanted to learn, or to study, fine arts, and who included all kinds of people. A dealer who had been handling medieval and Renaissance art and realized that there was much more baroque art available than there was Renaissance art, and why didn't he go into the baroque, would sign up and take a course with Panofsky. A woman whose children had grown up and had nothing to do would take a course there. The total student body, probably, may have been 125; it may have been 200. There were, however, what were called



"serious students." And there were about a dozen of these.

SMITH: Only a dozen?

COOLIDGE: It felt like that. It could conceivably have been twenty, but I don't think so. It was that order of magnitude. In a sense, the reason that Panofsky may have made that remark was that this was obviously a new serious student that was added to the dozen. Because I suppose, naturally, the professors tended to look over the new group coming in and see who were the ones who were likely to be serious students and talked to one another about that.

SMITH: What kind of career goals did you have?

COOLIDGE: I wanted to be a professor. I assumed that I would be a professor of architectural history. Certainly, going in there it never would have occurred to me that I would expect to have been [anything other than] Kenneth [J.] Conant.

SMITH: That's what you would expect to be.

COOLIDGE: I had made up my mind. I was giving up architecture. Well, what are you going to be? You're going to teach architectural history. What does that mean? Essentially, it means Kenneth Conant, with recognizing that I would always be a missionary, which he never was. Also recognizing, for two reasons, that I



would never teach at Harvard, because we shook the dust off our feet very gladly. Polly was Brookline [Massachusetts], I was Cambridge. We were thoroughly fed up and disapproving of Harvard at that time. I mean, it was no joke that I thought of going to [University of] Chicago. I was through with Harvard. Then, also, realizing that this was the most prestigious, or one of the most prestigious, places. I think I would have thought it the most prestigious, or I'm sure I would have thought it was self-prestigious, just like Groton. It was good as Groton was good. Everybody got good marks getting into the college board, so they thought it was the best. I didn't think it was the best. I wouldn't be teaching at Harvard, but it would be someplace similar. Beyond that, I didn't know-- This was the beginning of a serious career, and you knew that you would learn what was expected of you.

SMITH: What kind of one-on-one contact did you have with Panofsky as a student? Were there regular office hours that you could discuss with him your projects? Was he easy to talk to on that level?

COOLIDGE: Can we avoid that? I'll get to that. Can we defer that question? I took two other courses my first semester. I can't remember the fourth.



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COOLIDGE: My guess is that I was smart enough to-- If I signed up for four, I only took three. I may have taken four my first semester. In any case, one of them has slipped my memory. The second--and this was also like NYU and utterly unlike Harvard--was a course in Maya art, which I took simply because I knew nothing about it and because people who were interested in modern art, as I was profoundly, were aware of primitive cultures influencing modern art, and here was a chance to find out about a primitive culture I knew nothing about. It was all taught by anthropologists at Harvard. They didn't regard the art of primitive cultures as art, so nobody in fine arts would take it.

SMITH: Was that the course by Herbert Spinden?

COOLIDGE: Yes. Good for you. You looked that up, then. I couldn't remember his name. NYU regularly had, and I think by the time I was through was having, courses by Schapiro, people from other institutions. He was very highly regarded then. It was a perfectly dreadful course.

SMITH: The course you took with Schapiro?

COOLIDGE: No, I didn't take a course from Schapiro. The course I took from Spinden. He was one of the world's



worst lecturers. The material was wonderful, but his approach to it was so-- I don't know whether to say irrelevant or unsympathetic. He was terribly concerned with the discovery and the development of a written language in Mexican art, so we got quite an undue number of inscriptions and relatively less of sculpture and architecture. So we had this dreadful lecturer who was talking about the one aspect of the art that you couldn't give a damn about. Of course the astronomical aspect too, a great deal of astronomy, with introductory lectures between Greek and medieval and modern Western dating and view of the planets and the Mayan view of the planets, this kind of thing. In one sense, a very good course, but not for me at this point.

The other course I took was with Karl Lehmann, and this dealt I think with the art of Anatolia. In any case, I know that my term paper was on the wall tombs of Anatolia.

SMITH: On the Ionian coast or--?

COOLIDGE: I don't remember. I think it would have gotten inland a bit. In any case, it was purely Greek and Roman, because there were some Greek and Roman tombs that I got into.

Panofsky was a fabulous lecturer. Panofsky's lectures were performances. He knew he was a fabulous



lecturer and it was a performance. Karl Lehmann was very well organized, but it was a much more conversational kind of thing. It was much more what you might-- If you had a business reason to explain to me the running of UCLA, you would talk in a certain way. And it would be organized. You would begin with how they treat people at the bottom or at the board of trustees. You would have your own way of doing it, but you would talk-- And that was Karl Lehmann. Absolutely riveting, fascinating.

My paper on the tombs, which incredibly was accomplished without a knowledge of German, because much of the archaeology is German-- Maybe this was the second year, but it will do. It was introductory, anyway. All through the paper there was a word that was a technical term. I can't remember the word. I'm hunting for the parallel. It was a simple word, and the parallel might be "lintel." In fact, I think it may have been the particular Greek word that was used for lintel. But it came up all the time in terms of that subject.

Throughout my paper I wrote not "lintel" but "litnel." I simply transposed the thing. It was something that I wouldn't have known. You know "lintel" in general, but this was a simple term that was not widely known.

SMITH: And was in Greek.

COOLIDGE: Anglicized Greek. But he pointed out to me



that I had done this, which showed that I was reading and had simply not noticed the way the thing was spelled and simply misspelled it all the way through. I nonetheless got an A.

This is a good point to make, and I will talk about Panofsky a good deal more later. As a teacher, profoundly, Panofsky was aware of unsolved problems and aware of problems to which a student could make a contribution. I had said to him, "Well, I don't know anything about Roman baroque art. What topic would you suggest for me?" He would suggest a topic that was manageable, or was maybe controversial, which I could by working hard at least satisfy myself that I'd come to a conclusion on. And even, conceivably, produce something not publishable necessarily, but at least would get in somebody else's footnote. So you would create that. I take that back. That's the kind of paper Karl Lehmann gave you. Karl Lehmann gave you things that were really open. Panofsky gave you problems which might be open, but to which he had personally the answer. In anything you did, you didn't realize that he had the answer, that when you came to discuss it with him, if you got it right his way, he would give you additional reasons why it was right his way. [laughter] If you got it wrong, he would tell you why he disagreed. He was very modest about



this. He was always open. That willingness to take my paper was part of this. He never thought of the baroque as existing in America particularly, and he--

SMITH: So he couldn't have approached your paper on the basis of preconceived right or wrong.

COOLIDGE: No. No, this was feeding in and I guess didn't happen all that often, only happened for me.

Because few people who took the baroque course were as ignorant of the baroque as I was.

SMITH: Did you establish to his satisfaction that there was--?

COOLIDGE: An evolution? Yes. I think so. I don't know. I've forgotten what I did. I throw away nothing, so that paper is somewhere, as you saw with my scrambling around yesterday. For Lehmann, it was genuinely nobody had looked at, pulled together these things. They were minor art, but they were frequent and a popular art. And how often did you get, should we say-- They were Roman, and how often did you get perceptible Greek influences? Being in Anatolia, how often did you have Italian influence from Rome proper? Things that were non-Greek about them. I'm not saying it was significant, but it was at least fresh to him. He was easily the most stimulating person I had.

SMITH: Karl Lehmann.



COOLIDGE: Karl Lehmann. Karl was friendly, and there is a whole chapter that I can get into here, in fact should get into, about the social relationship of student to teacher at Harvard and at NYU. But suffice it to say that Karl had been to dinner at our house. I could go on about the way Karl Lehmann's expedition to Samothrace got going.

Ah, yes, now it comes back to me. The summer after-- or perhaps not the summer, but a summer after--Panofsky's course, and after taking several courses with Karl Lehmann, I went to Italy and specifically Rome, not entirely Rome. At the end of it, I realized that while I'd looked at every baroque building I could remember, I hadn't gone to the Roman forum and I hadn't seen any classical art in a museum. The reason for me bringing this up is simply to say that Karl Lehmann was such a good teacher that I seriously debated becoming, at this point, a classical archaeologist. It was only when I got to Rome and realized it was the bewitchment of Karl as a teacher that had interested me, and that I really wasn't interested in the objects, that I said no.

Now, the other side of the thing is-- And, again, this is typical of the relationships. Well, let me bring it in from the beginning, because it's typical of the German refugees. They were fascinated in America, and

they were curious about America. The Metropolitan Museum [of Art] ran, and probably still does run, courses in the evening at an undergraduate level, designed for the prosperous businessman or his wife or people who were just curious about Greek art. One year Karl Lehmann, never having taught such a thing before, gave a course in the higher art of antiquity in this series. Nothing like that existed in Germany. He had taught enough and could speak perfectly well--all these people could speak splendid English, except for the accent. It was just, well, how do you go about teaching the general public?

A couple, a middle-aged couple, in the middle of this course--whose name I've forgotten at the moment, but it will come back to me--came up and asked him some questions about the course, specifically about the material. "We didn't quite understand what you meant in saying that about Roman portraitures compared with the Greek." So he discussed it with them, and I guess this happened more than once. Maybe even there was a social contact. They had him to dinner or something. In any case, the next thing was that they said that the man was a broker on Wall Street and successful to the point that he could control his own time. He and his wife asked Karl Lehmann if he would conduct them on a tour of the Greek islands. Two weeks, whatever. They'd pay it, but



would he take them? And Karl did. And when Karl Lehmann, the next year or sometime afterwards, decided to excavate at Samothrace, this couple were the patrons who made the launching of that excavation possible. So this is to illustrate the way a refugee's life could work.

The person who helped me on American Gothic churches was Henry-Russell Hitchcock, then teaching at Wesleyan [University]. Russell became almost at once a very good friend, and the first time my name appeared in print in art history was in the acknowledgements for his book on [H. H.] Richardson, because I'd read it, at least parts of it, in manuscript. He thanked me for that. Henry-Russell Hitchcock--this is going back a step, but he was very important--came to New York frequently. When I was teaching my first semester at Columbia, he came down and asked me if I'd be interested to go visit some dealers' galleries. He had a close friend, [R.] Kirk Askew, who ran Durlacher [Brothers] gallery. We went there, certainly, but that was among others.

I think that it was at the Durlacher Gallery that we met a John McAndrew, probably a name that you won't know. He was an architect who had gone into architectural history. He was approximately Russell's age. He was thoroughly International style. Of course it was the Depression. It was hard to start as an architect, in any

case, though he considered himself at least potentially an architect. By the mid-thirties he was teaching as a regular member of the faculty at Vassar [College]. Now, I met him that once, and it was very pleasant. We saw each other for five or ten minutes and were looking at pictures and talking to Kirk.

The spring of that year, or the middle of that year, Vassar got the money to remodel Taylor Hall, which was in effect their art building. It was not wholly independent of other buildings, and it may have had other offices in it, but all the art building was in Taylor Hall. It was essentially a major interior remodeling. I don't think there was any exterior; I don't think there was anything added to it. John McAndrew was to be the architect to do it. He was trained enough, but also experienced enough. This was a not illogical thing to do. They weren't picking just an art professor. But the decision came after the second semester had started. He said he would love to do it, but he would have to abandon a course that he had started on modern architecture.

Out of the blue, I was asked to give I think three lectures on modern architecture in whatever they did to replace that course. They were a week apart or something like that. This was my introduction to Vassar. I can only think that John and Russell, who were very much part

of the same group, jealous of one another, yet so much part of the same group that they were in constant touch with one another-- That Russell, who had known my thesis, may even indeed have had a copy of it, certainly knew my work, had recommended me to John. And John, when he had to produce somebody to replace him for some of these lectures, picked me. Because as a first-year graduate student-- In a, so to say, advanced course at Vassar--it was not an introductory course, but it was the upper-level course--you don't generally get a first-year graduate student, particularly somebody you had only met for five minutes in a dealer's gallery.

SMITH: That was your first teaching assignment?

COOLIDGE: Those three lectures were my first teaching assignment. Then they led the next year--no, not the next year, but a couple of years later--to being a teaching fellow at Vassar.

SMITH: And you were responsible for teaching what courses?

COOLIDGE: They had, and still have, a fabulous introductory lecture course. I mentioned it. It was then, and it is now, so good that half or more than half of every student [class] at Vassar takes it. Which I find just extraordinary. But I jump ahead to say "still." Because they're building a new museum, they



have their first visiting committee, and I'm on the visiting committee. We've met, and one of the things we did was to find out about education in the fine arts and that fact. I asked them if the course was going on, how many people does it reach, what's the number of students at Vassar, so forth. So that fact was true then. This is of course independent of other courses. You know, an American historian takes courses in American art at Vassar. That's in addition to the introductory survey.

The introductory survey had--which we didn't at Harvard, but later adopted--section meetings. Fine Arts 13 was taught, in principle, by all the faculty. Now, I don't say that one of them didn't escape, but in principle everybody taught it, which meant lecturing on it, but also taking a section. But you had to have outsiders to take-- You couldn't ask a mature full professor or the chairman of the department to take more than one section. I mean, there are a limited number of blue books such a person can be asked to take, so you bring in teaching fellows. I was a teaching fellow for two years at Vassar for that.

Here again--enormous hats off to Vassar--the second semester of the second year I taught a course on Roman art. Now, I was eligible for that because I had taken a lot with Karl Lehmann. They didn't have anybody on the



faculty who was particularly deep in Roman art. I mean, a person perhaps was a Greek person, or maybe they were having a sabbatical. In any case, they said, "You will bring us the latest information, which we wouldn't get from just anybody." I said I taught it--I shared it with a person from the classics department. Nonetheless, Vassar was getting a senior student from a first-rate graduate-student school who would give them the new things, and they were giving a teaching fellow experience giving a lecture course. We worked the course out together. I mean, I wasn't a junior helping out the professor from the classics department. This was a joint course. This, I think, is educationally terrific.

SMITH: That was very fortunate.

COOLIDGE: It was extraordinarily fortunate for me. But back to NYU. I had two reasons for turning down classical antiquity. One was that-- No, I turned it down before. It was after I went to Rome and I realized I had been right, because though I'd studied it a lot, it didn't interest me enough. I won't say it wouldn't interest me enough to have made my career on it. There would always have been art that interested me more. Also, I could see very little connection between classical antiquity and contemporary art. Whereas contemporary art appeals to people who-- The baroque was

a new field, and new fields are apt to be-- People who are interested in new fields are apt to concern themselves with the contemporary in art, so that there was a link there, human link.

SMITH: So at this time, in the late thirties, you made a personal choice to focus on baroque, particularly Italian baroque.

COOLIDGE: No, I didn't. Karl Lehmann asked me if I would go on the first expedition to Samothrace--this is what I was getting into--and I said no to that. I think I said no because I knew I wasn't going to get into classical studies. An additional reason-- I kept consulting Karl Lehmann. I remember asking Karl, "All right, if I'm going to be a classical archaeologist, and I took enough courses so this was obviously a potential possibility, how many foreign languages do I have to know?" I'd studied Greek, I'd studied some Latin at Groton. I didn't know any Latin. I mean, I had Latin for four years, and they hadn't taught me a damn thing. This seemed to me typical of Groton, that I couldn't use Latin. He said, "Latin and certainly Greek. Possibly additional languages. If you get into dealing with relations in the classical world in the Roman times, or even in the Greek times with the Islamic world, you may have to learn others. But certainly Latin and Greek." I



had to learn Italian. I had to learn German. If I was going to be a medievalist, I couldn't take on Greek. So at that point I made up my own mind I couldn't be a classical archaeologist.

I'm talking about this in terms of method. Karl Lehmann taught a lecture course-- I guess they taught two courses each semester, and he would give probably in the course of the year two lecture courses and two seminars. Well, John McAndrew and I were both interested in Roman architecture, and we asked him if he would give a seminar on Roman architecture. He said sure. So the next fall, he gave a seminar on Roman architecture. I want to give you an idea of the way these things worked. A senior curator at the Metropolitan Museum, who had himself at least been on a dig, if not-- I think he had a degree in archaeology, and he was working in some aspect of classical antiquity. So here you've got a person like that, again, who had dug in Greece and never had a chance to hear about Roman architecture, he got Karl Lehmann giving a seminar. Well, we got half a dozen such people of this sort, certainly two of Karl's regular pupils. I mean, the people he was training in classical archaeology would have been there. It went terribly well, partly because a person like John McAndrew, who was ten years older than I, gave a report on a topic. He gave the kind



of report that was stimulating and that you don't hear from graduate students every day. And similarly, the curator gave a report.

Well, it went so well that by the first of December, I talked this over with John. He agreed, and I went to see Karl. I said, "Look. All of us are having a wonderful time, and I think you're having a wonderful time. Can't we continue this seminar into the second semester?" Karl stopped and said, "Well, it will mean that I have to cancel the seminar that I was planning to give on Greek sculpture. I'd like to do this very much, but let me find out if it's too late to cancel a seminar." So the thing continued. Well, Karl was this kind of person.

One of the most successful dinner parties we ever gave, we had the Lehmanns come to dinner and Russell Hitchcock. They're both very lively people. Karl was widely interested within the classical field and interested in problems like city planning, because he had done the standard thing on the planning of ports in antiquity [Die Antiken Hafenanlagen des Mittelmeeres]. Russell Hitchcock is just broadly interested, and these two people just hit it off. You could get to know your professors and invite them to dinner and invite them to meet your friends. It flipped the other way, too. So



that you got to know them very well, particularly as, of course, what Walter Cook told me was theoretically possible but practically impossible. Five years, nobody got their degree in five years. This was the way Karl Lehmann's courses worked, and in principle other courses worked that way.

SMITH: Of course, if you had gone to Harvard or Yale [University] or Princeton [University], theoretically you could have completed your work in five years.

COOLIDGE: Yes, that's right. Indeed, when I graduated from Harvard, I was going to architectural school, but I got word from Kenneth Conant, who said to me, "I am speaking for the department. If you would consider doing your Ph.D. here, you could get everything but the thesis done in two years." Well, since I was going to be an architect, the thing didn't interest me in theory. Since I was anti-Harvard, it didn't interest me in practice. So that was that. I think that if I'd said, "Well, how long would it take to write a thesis?" they might have said another year. But it was certainly something like three years. In fact, the rule, you have to have three years now, ever since the forties, and I think it was true then. But you could get it in three years theoretically at Harvard, and one person a year ahead of me got through the course work and the general exam in



two. But New York, well, that was a different story.

SMITH: Did you have much social interaction with Panofsky?

COOLIDGE: The point of this was that of course then, being an art historian, I knew I was going to teach at least sculpture and painting as well as architecture. So I began taking courses that were limited to sculpture and painting. I certainly took at least another course with Pan, but I realized that what I had never had was any course in painting that was focused on connoisseurship. So I went to Pan my fourth or fifth year, something like that--well, specifically, probably in '39--and said, "Look, if I come to live in Princeton, can I study with nobody but you for a year? Because I'm interested in connoisseurship, specifically in painting, because I've never really done it." His reply was, "Yes, of course you can, but if you're interested in connoisseurship, spend a year studying with Walter Friedlaender." Which was absolutely correct. I indeed did end up spending a lot of time with Walter Friedlaender, but I really wanted a year with Pan. While I can remember the Roman baroque course, and I suspect I took one other I don't remember-- But I was impressed enough-- And that's the answer to your question.

What I spent the year studying was a field that



interested me very much. He knew a great many fields. I don't know that he'd ever specifically given a course-- This was in Flemish painting, early Flemish painting, and he suggested I work on Rogier van der Weyden.

SMITH: Was this like a reading course that you took with him?

COOLIDGE: Yes, it amounted to that.

SMITH: You were not involved in a seminar per se.

COOLIDGE: No. It was a full-year reading course, and I would report to him, though I never had anything to write. The second semester, he taught a seminar at Princeton on German art of the fifteenth and sixteenth century, Dürer plus or minus, as it were, chronologically plus or minus. He suggested I take that course, so I did. I'm now being badgered as a Princeton alumnus to contribute, as well as having Columbia, Harvard, and NYU on my trail! But, yes, I mean I got to know him well as a teacher. It's on this basis that I say he gave you things that hadn't been studied, but he always knew the answer before he gave them to you. Or it worked out that the answer was-- As you were telling the thing, it lacked the-- The proof of this is that he's had almost no pupils.

SMITH: You mean nobody, no Ph.D.'s?

COOLIDGE: Well, there are people who teach who are

iconographers here today. But the people who teach iconography now are not students of Panofsky. I mean pupils in the sense of I was a pupil of Karl Lehmann. Panofsky didn't produce from NYU anybody of consequence in iconography that I can think of. Some of the people in NYU got into it, but by and large NYU has not produced iconographers.

SMITH: And yet that's what it's known for.

COOLIDGE: Well, in a broader sense that was because all of the Germans-- Because Aby Warburg had gotten German art history into this. Panofsky was the specialist, but all of them were much more aware of it.

SMITH: I think the next logical thing is how Mill and Mansion: [A Study of Architecture and Society in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1820-1865] came to be written, unless you have something else that--

COOLIDGE: No. I have lots more to say on NYU, but I'll talk about Mill and Mansion. Well, that was very simple. To get an M.A., you had to write a thesis. There's a serious M.A. Harvard has an M.A. I think it's a useful thing to have the kind of M.A. they have--I'd vote for continuing it the way it is--but it's not a serious M.A. Harvard's M.A., by the way-- We'll say that every department, however careful, and every individual makes mistakes. You get plenty of people who come here and

have my experience at architecture, who after a year should not have come here or who should not have been admitted. The Harvard M.A. gives them a degree after a year's work. They've had a year of graduate work, and they have something to show for it.

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COOLIDGE: One difference: Harvard [University] has language exams. New York [University (NYU)] doesn't have language exams. You just have to know the languages-- period. That's why I spent my first summer in Harvard and the next, a subsequent summer, in Munich learning German. Because I had not had any of it, and one needed to be thoroughly comfortable reading art history in German. Well, the serious M.A. involved, I think, three years of courses and a thesis. With learning German and a child-- I had not been to Europe to study anything particular. I had been to Europe with my parents, but I'd never been to Italy until I was a graduate student. I may be wrong on that, I can't recall.

SMITH: Your father [Julian Lowell Coolidge] taught at--

COOLIDGE: Yes, I spent the Christmas vacation, because I was in school, and it was a longish one. I'd been to Rome at the age of twelve. I knew from Mill [and Mansion: A Study of Architecture and Society in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1820-1865] and from the undergraduate thesis that I was interested in working with the documents. I obviously didn't know any Italian buildings that I could write on, and with a year-old child-- Sure,

I could have found something here and gone over there, but that would have meant leaving either Polly [Welch Coolidge] and the child, or the child certainly, alone. Furthermore, believing in buildings and feeling that I'd had an exceptionally lousy education and that the professors were all so fabulously educated, the thing that was indicated was to do a thesis on the American field. The reaction to the Gothic revival was that it was very precious. I think I told you how I got into Mill and Mansion. Did I?

SMITH: No, you haven't.

COOLIDGE: Within a week I have to tell this, so I couldn't know if I'd mentioned it twice. Well, it was a question, enormously, of the elite working for the elite, and insofar as it wasn't the elite working for the elite, it was the Catholics trying to behave like the elite. And neither were you dealing with the entire work of one architect. A person like Richard Upjohn primarily did churches, did only Gothic churches. Other architects were doing a whole range of buildings. Furthermore, you were dealing in all-Protestant connections with a very particular group of people, so that it wasn't an adequate approach to nineteenth-century architecture. I felt that approaching it by style wasn't adequate either, because all styles were running together. I talked to Bob

[Robert Keen] Lamb, who I think I did mention to you. I wanted to do something in American architecture, and I didn't know what to do. He was at that moment doing New Bedford [Massachusetts] and the other neighboring city [Fall River], the two mercantile cities side by side down there. I, with the child-- Did I tell you this?

SMITH: You did mention that you went up to Manchester [New Hampshire].

COOLIDGE: I went up to Manchester, and that got me into Lowell.

SMITH: And that's where we left off.

COOLIDGE: That's where we left off, yes.

SMITH: You began your study of Lowell.

COOLIDGE: I began my study of Lowell with the M.A. thesis in mind. This was probably in my first year or second year as a teaching fellow at Vassar [College]. I wrote the thesis. There was no particular direction to the thesis. I hit on a cotton mill town because that was clearly the nearest thing to work on. I didn't hit on it because it was the beginning of American industrial history. The moment you hit on Manchester, you got to Lowell. You discovered this was an interesting subject. Any community would have done, so to speak, or any city would have done, because I think the study of architecture is-- Well, nineteenth-century architecture



is the study of cities, and if you're interested in something that is representative, you really end up doing that.

SMITH: Again, in terms of your faculty at NYU, none of them really had competency in American subjects.

COOLIDGE: No, but one thing had happened. My first year teaching at Vassar-- Well, one of the things that happened in general-- Walter Cook remarked that Hitler shook the tree and he picked up the apples. No other department was seriously interested in German refugees. Yale [University] had a French connection, a visiting professor from France, one of two [Henri Focillon and Marcel Aubert] who came back repeatedly. Harvard replaced [Arthur] Kingsley Porter with a refugee [Wilhelm Koehler]. [University of] Chicago had a very remarkable refugee [Ulrich Middeldorf], but their art history department was so snarled up. You know, they have a department that teaches humanities in general, and either that professor was not in art history but a person in general, or the good students of art history took the general course. In fairness, he wasn't at that moment being particularly effective. But Vassar, which was enormously in touch with the Museum of Modern Art world and John McAndrew and Agnes Rindge--she was in fact the chairman--was enormously up-to-date. At present, it's

the second-largest department. It's second in the number of students it appeals to. It must have been very high.

The department thought that they would get a refugee, and they got one, Richard Krautheimer, with whom my life is singularly and curiously intertwined. He was late. He didn't come to America until '35 or '36, and the jobs were all gone. But he got an appointment to start an art department at the University of Louisville. He taught there for perhaps a couple of years, and all the other refugees knew and admired him. He was easily the best refugee of his generation. Vassar got Richard Krautheimer, and Richard Krautheimer and I started the same year at Vassar. He was immediately sympathetic. In fact, I'd known his work as an architectural historian. I went to a tutor who was an art historian my first year in New York. She was a German, and she gave me as German to read at home a manuscript of Richard Krautheimer's. So I knew of him through an unpublished manuscript.

A small thing, by the way, but indicative. I was at Vassar one or two nights a week, and one night in the autumn, the Krautheimers invited me to dinner alone. I went, and we had a perfectly delicious dinner. After dinner the doorbell rang, and it was tricks or treats. And they'd never heard of Halloween and said, "What Halloween?" They'd never heard of it. Well, just



fortunately, beside the door, partly because they were entertaining, there was a dish of chocolate mints. I explained the custom, and then I simply stood there the rest of the evening handing out chocolate mints to the kids that came around. Well, it was this sort of relationship one had with Richard Krautheimer. He was the architectural historian at the Institute [of Fine Arts, New York University].

Again, the Institute knew all the younger American architectural historians, and I imagine that they felt free to turn to [Henry-]Russell Hitchcock--you mention anybody--to read an M.A. thesis on an American subject. In any case, they prided themselves on teaching art history and not this discipline or that. You had, I think, eight full courses, which was sixteen half courses, which meant the faculty knew you fairly well by the time you had got to this. So they would not have allowed you to go ahead unless you were likely material for a Ph.D. I mean, you were more than a serious student. They would have thrown you out after, certainly, the second year. Some people did take four courses, but an awful lot of us didn't, so you were at least three years completing your course work. I had done that. Then it was their responsibility to see that you wrote a good thesis, and that involved getting in

somebody to read it. Well, they'll do that.

SMITH: So Krautheimer became, in effect, the chair of your thesis?

COOLIDGE: Krautheimer read my M.A. thesis and liked it and reported on it. I would think that he at least consulted Russell Hitchcock and said, "What do you think? You know him, and what do you think of him?" We continued knowing Russell, and we went to Wesleyan [University] where he was teaching, for weekends. He called on us when he came to New York frequently, and this relationship continued not, I regret, until the end of his life, but until the last ten years of his life.

SMITH: You stated in the introduction that there was quite a lot written about Lowell, or about the mill towns. Yet your notes seem to be primary sources, largely primary sources, not very many references to secondary literature. Were you entering pretty much fresh ground in terms of the subject? In terms of scholarly attention to the architectural history aspect of Lowell?

COOLIDGE: That was brand-new. Absolutely brand-new. By the way, University of Mass[achusetts] wants to put it in paperback. I'm back at Lowell, because it's fifty years old, and I've got to say something about the last fifty years in Lowell. That's why I'm writing a chapter on

Lowell at the moment. I'll go back to that when this is through. But that has given me an awareness of the Lowell bibliography. Lowell has been well served by local historians. Nothing extraordinary, but there were at least two published histories of Lowell. There was at the time I was working a socioeconomist teaching at Wellesley [College] who in 1940 published a book on Lowell. I've got the book right in the next room. It's Lowell: A Study of Industrial Development. Those two books were the first scholarly books on Lowell, I think, of any kind. Since then, in the fifty years since, there's been one general history book, and rather inadequate--in fact very inadequate--that's come out of the University of Lowell on Lowell. But a great deal of outside work, but even more exclusively than Parker. Her name was Margaret Parker. She's died since, as I should have after fifty years. They are even narrower than I was. At least I got into one other discipline; I got into the sociology. These books are almost virtually entirely about the mill girls, other aspects of Lowell. There's a paper on Lowell's economics during the war, and there's a remarkable undergraduate paper on Lowell's revival. But otherwise, there's been nothing. And before this was, except for Margaret Parker, which-- She didn't know me, and I didn't know her. She was a

graduate student at the University of Illinois, I think.

SMITH: What about the study of vernacular architecture? How developed was that at the time you were writing the book?

COOLIDGE: I don't know. It was sufficiently undeveloped so that I could respectably say I don't know.

SMITH: You weren't plugging into any kind of tradition?

COOLIDGE: I wasn't plugging into any tradition. I'm not saying that work hadn't been done on the vernacular architecture--

SMITH: Not necessarily of Lowell--

COOLIDGE: No, I mean in general, American vernacular architecture. To begin with, this tends to be in the nature of things rural. I mean, it tends to be farm buildings or things of that sort. The mansions of Virginia, yes, that kind, and obviously slums and housing in cities. But not the kind of architecture which is essentially farm architecture in the country.

SMITH: But there have been no studies of tenement housing in New York or Boston that you--?

COOLIDGE: Oh, sure, there's a book that I refer to frequently about the South End housing in Boston. I was talking about the South End rooming houses and workers' housing. A person at the bottom rung of the ladder, where did a man live? Well, you rented a room in a



rooming house, and that was in South End Boston. That book I had read. But that was unusual. There wasn't much. I've later come to know more about the historical literature on housing, but that was an unusual one at that time.

SMITH: What about the state of the social history of mill towns? Not necessarily Lowell, but just the mill towns and their demographics.

COOLIDGE: Well, there was nothing on mill towns as such, I think. I would have known, because I did look for industrial towns in general, and, you know, I came across Essen [Germany], for instance, which had model housing. I don't think I knew about Pullman [Illinois] then. I think I learned about that later. On the whole, industrial towns in this country were always later than Lowell. I knew up through the Civil War, but I didn't know about industrial towns post-Civil War. What there were were books on the cotton industry and books on the history of manufacturing. Classic books and very good books, but they are in-- If not in the bibliography, they're in the notes. But that was the literature, and Bob Lamb's work on New Bedford and Fall River I think was innovative. To my knowledge, he went on to become the chief economist for the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations], which perhaps reflects the kind of people



I was associating with at Harvard. I mean, he didn't seem in the least peculiar or left wing to me. That's the kind of thing I expected. I think that it [Lamb's work] has never been published. I think I would have known if it were seriously published.

SMITH: What about the status of city planning history literature? Was there a body of literature that you could turn to?

COOLIDGE: Yes, and one of the leading figures on that, a refugee named Werner Hegemann-- Interesting. He was a man of sixty. He taught a course that I took at Columbia [University] my first year. It was involved with modern architecture, but from the point of view of a city planner, so we would look at urbanistic phenomena in New York. It operated like a seminar. It wasn't a small class, but there were perhaps fifteen. I remember going to visit a skyscraper and being astonished to learn--it makes sense the moment you think of it, but it's not in the literature--that skyscrapers have enormous water tanks. Because, obviously, if they didn't, when all the toilets were turned off at five o'clock in all the offices, it would burst the pipes underneath. So the water from the toilets in the skyscraper is taken out of its own supply. We went to a skyscraper as much to see the basic connection of a skyscraper to the water system



as to see the skyscraper as a piece of architecture. He took us to Forest Hills as a middle-class, or upper-middle-class, suburban housing development.

Werner Hegemann produced two big books on city planning, the first in German, the second published in 1920 about American cities [The American Vitruvius: An Architects' Handbook of Civic Art], and he did that in collaboration with an American [Elbert Peets]. It's in English. I can show you the book. There was a large literature on the history of city planning, with which I had some familiarity, but no study, that I am aware of, of industrial cities. But I can't remember whether I learned that as an undergraduate or when I went into teaching.

SMITH: Maybe you could just briefly define how the problem of the book evolved, from when you started working to the conclusion of the book. Have your thoughts about the subject changed? Were there questions that remained unresolved in your mind about the material? How did you handle that?

COOLIDGE: The big intermediate thing came from Polly. She had read the manuscript of the M.A. thesis. And NYU then--and I don't know whether it was the university on the whole or whether it was the Institute of Fine Arts--had a link with Columbia University Press. The Institute



suggested that they might be interested in publishing this, because of the Institute's link. Polly said, having read it, "The first thing you've got to do is to rewrite it. This is written not in English, but in German-American." I had lost the ability to write English, according to her. So it did have to be rewritten.

I don't remember at what point, but I took a lot of photography of the place, and I'm sure that when it was coming out, I went back there and did some more. I remember one of the things that occurred to me was that I'd written about boarding houses, and these were now all rooming houses, and I'd never even spent the night in one. So I spent the night in a rooming house on a trip to photograph buildings. [laughter] There wasn't any change that I can now remember.

I don't know if I have a copy of the manuscript. It would seem to me odd if I don't. But I can't remember making any change, except I know, Polly having said that, that I certainly worried. I think in college I wrote for the Critic. The first thing that was ever published was a thing I wrote as a first year, I guess in Columbia, which came out as "Modern House" in the Atlantic. It was a shock to me when my wife told me I couldn't write English, because I was the editor of the school magazine.

It's a thing that I've always cared about, and I must have worked over the thesis. I can't remember changing the structure, which sounds as if it was final at first blast, which seems unlikely, but I just don't remember.

SMITH: The structure, to me, appears very logical. What I'm wondering about is the process of your thinking developing to arrive at that particular logic.

COOLIDGE: Well, I think that's indicated. In the first place, it's a simple community, as I dealt with it, which was not why I got into it, you know. I thought of it as an industrial town, the way one would do a history of Lowell or a Worcester [Massachusetts] or any town and find out that it had this particular character. That greatly simplified the writing of the thing. The bourgeoisie in those years has yet to be written about.

SMITH: What do you mean by that? The middle class?

COOLIDGE: I mean the people who ran the town, who ran the stores, the religion. That hunk of life, fully half the population, has never been studied at all. To do that would be going back to original documents, as of this moment, despite more publication on Lowell in the first half of the century, in detail now. The works: the mill girls, the girls who didn't go to the mills but stayed at home at the farms. All this stuff's been written up. I can show you. They're all in my bedroom,

where I'm working. So it does seem to solve itself. The moment you got into it, you saw you had to write the history of the social phenomenon, and then the buildings, the non-mills, the bourgeoisie buildings--you had maps which you were using, anyway--and then you recorded the interesting buildings.

SMITH: I'm not sure that it was a problem, but was it a problem dealing with a topic, an art historical topic, that many art historians in the United States at that time might not consider to be--? These buildings might not be art. None of the buildings you were dealing with were monuments in the traditional sense.

COOLIDGE: I wasn't writing for them. I was writing for my German professors, who were perfectly happy and who indeed turned in into a book, so to speak. It was their suggestion that it be published, not mine.

SMITH: In terms of the audience when it was published-- And I gather it's still a very important book in urban planning circles.

COOLIDGE: I don't know. I can only recall one review. There was only one review of consequence. I'm not saying that it didn't have others, but I don't know. I mean, the kind of one-paragraph mention may have come up, but there was one serious review.

SMITH: Well, I could tell you actually some American

history textbooks that cite it.

COOLIDGE: Oh, okay, well, all right. [laughter]

SMITH: Not art history, but American history. It's one of the staples of the pre-Civil War period.

COOLIDGE: Well, that's because the sociology has an independent interest, and that's probably not treated as briefly anywhere else.

TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE ONE

APRIL 10, 1991

SMITH: When we left off, we were finishing up some discussion of Mill and Mansion: [A Study of Architecture and Society in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1820-1865]. I'd wanted to ask you about some of the people--

COOLIDGE: Put down on your piece of paper that I have two NYU [New York University] thoughts. Instead of beginning them, we might as well finish up Mill and Mansion, and then go to the two things to add to what I was saying. Yes, your questions.

SMITH: Actually, before we go into the acknowledgments, I wanted to ask-- In your introduction, you place yourself in a relationship to the modern movement in architecture. It struck me the way you wrote the introduction, you seem to be distancing yourself from [Nikolaus] Pevsner's canon as presented in Pioneers of Modern Design. You are more sympathetic to nineteenth-century architectural design than somebody like Pevsner is.

COOLIDGE: I didn't know Pevsner then. I got to know him when he was an air raid warden in London during the war. I looked him up, and that was the beginning of quite a good friendship. I certainly would not now say that

there was any significant difference in my point of view from his. This is not the result of any change in my point of view that I am aware of. Either you're reading more into it or I've forgotten an attitude, because he was completely sympathetic. I was completely sympathetic with the point of view of the man I got to know. That was the difference between a book published in '42 and an acquaintance started in '44.

SMITH: What about your interest in housing issues? At the end of the book, you make a statement about the capabilities of America to provide decent, mass, low-cost housing. Were you involved in any other way in terms of discussions at that time on what should be done about housing problems?

COOLIDGE: Housing was, of course, for contemporary architecture in America, very much in the air in general. I remained--and to some extent still am--very interested in contemporary architecture and what's being discussed. Specifically, in the thirties in New York, I was on some kind of advisory committee at the Museum of Modern Art, and there was discussion of an exhibition of housing. And there, through this, I got to meet Catherine Bauer and Fritz [Frederick] Gutheim. Catherine Bauer was the author of the standard book on modern housing. And then when we moved to Princeton [University], we got to know



her sister [Elizabeth Bauer Mock], who was also interested in architecture and worked for the Museum of Modern Art. Catherine Bauer certainly didn't--I think she was [working for] Washington agencies. It was not a personal interest of mine. I can't imagine writing a book on that. But it was very much an interest of people who were friends, if not close friends. Even at my year at Columbia [University], there was a guy who had been associated with Letchworth and Welwyn in London [Henry Wright], a distinguished Englishman who was, I guess, visiting for the year. Heavens, on our honeymoon in '35 we went to a housing conference, which bored the bejesus out of Polly. [laughter] So this was a fringe interest of mine, but not a neat one. I found the results visually so boring that I have gradually over the years lost interest, though I have continued to go look at these things.

SMITH: The results here in the U.S. or also the results in Germany?

COOLIDGE: Yes, both.

SMITH: The Weissenhofsiedlung?

COOLIDGE: Well, that is really an exhibition piece of single-family houses, like Gray Gardens East and West. It's not like the housing developments in Berlin or Siemenstadt or Frankfurt. Then another trip to Europe, I



went to see the-- I feel passionately that anyone who is interested in the history of art should be in touch with the art of his own day. For me, of course I was interested in painting and sculpture, but I felt a sort of obligation to be in touch with architecture. So I went to look at the Amsterdam school of housing. This was marvelously clarifying about the weakness of the German material, which I felt instinctively, but hadn't phrased for myself until I saw the way the Dutch had it. The Dutch, like the English, start from a community rather than a social base. The Germans provide low-cost housing for workers. The Dutch and English build communities where the housing will be for workers, but-- I mean, what's striking in the German thing is that there is no relationship between the dwellings and the schools or the dwellings and the shops. There might be a great big huge development with a little coffee shop at the corner, but it was never conceived as a community. It was solving a sociological problem, not a human, community problem. This was why I never got very deep into housing. Well, I did know the Bauer sisters. Elizabeth Bauer just moved to a retirement home here, and we see her and will continue to see her. Catherine has died.

SMITH: I wanted to ask you about the people you

mentioned in the acknowledgments and your relationship with them. Some we've already discussed. The first of them is Alfred Barr, who we've yet to discuss. It seems that you have an ongoing relation with him over the decades.

COOLIDGE: Well, again, modern art was a discovery freshman year, and modern architecture developed partly with [Kenneth J.] Conant, but a great deal on my own. Then when I got to know [Henry-]Russell Hitchcock in connection with my undergraduate thesis, he took me into the whole Museum of Modern Art crowd. I was even on an advisory committee there. The group there that counted, the originators, were about ten years older than I, but I knew the lot well and have continued to know them. I see Philip Johnson, who is the last survivor, I guess--the architect Philip Johnson--from time to time. We're in touch. He was never an intimate friend. We knew Alfred all our lives, and then he ended up as chairman of the visiting committee. I don't know if you have a visiting committee at UCLA or you know what I'm talking about.

SMITH: Yes, I know what you're talking about.

COOLIDGE: Well, he became chairman of our visiting committee, and I saw him then. But I've always known him, and we got to know him in the thirties. Russell Hitchcock was the closest friend, the real friend. The

others may or may not have dined in this house. This is a thing that I simply don't remember, but they perfectly well could have. If they did dine in this house, that happened when they were in Cambridge and we were all involved in some common thing. But they were completely relaxed, first-name friends. I wouldn't have thought of addressing him as Mr. Barr. He became Alfred and his wife was Margaret [or "Daisy"], and so forth and so on. This was a two-way street. I wasn't a presumptuous youngster. Polly too, from the beginning.

SMITH: What about Lewis Mumford? You mentioned him. Did you have discussions about this topic?

COOLIDGE: No, none. But--and I find this extraordinary (I don't remember the details)--there was one vivid thing that I'll get to. I imagine that between the thesis and the manuscripts submitted to Columbia, I sent the manuscript to him, probably unsolicited. He wrote me back a very nice letter and said--and this came out of the blue for a graduate student--"Please do not thank me. You have contributed so much more to me than I can possibly contribute to you." Well, this was staggering to me--and, you know, it is not a long book, but it is a couple of hundred of pages of type or something like that--from a guy you don't know. I never got to know him on a first-name basis. I think he would have remembered

my name, but probably have forgotten my face. When he would give a lecture somewhere, I would go. He obviously wouldn't have been in the acknowledgments unless he had made some suggestions. I never met his wife and did not know of his intimacy with our friend Catherine Bauer. Certainly he was never in any house of mine; I was never in any house of his. But we had a potential for intellectual friendship that in fact never developed. Other times I met him, it was always when he was giving a lecture here, and there would be a cocktail party afterwards. I would go up and shake his hand, that kind of thing.

SMITH: You said you had a couple of things you wanted to add about your experiences at NYU.

COOLIDGE: They seem to come in naturally. The first thing is that as a mature American professor, one is on visiting committees for other institutions. You're on a list of advisers for the American journal in your field, and you read manuscripts. I've been active in both the learned societies, the College Art Association [of America] and the Society of Architectural Historians. I've been officers of both. This was entirely true of the Harvard [University] professors. Now, cumulatively, this takes quite a hunk of time. There is nothing unusual about this. Every professor in a major



institution which has a good department-- If you don't contribute to sessions at the annual meeting, then you organize sessions. It's a substantial hunk of life. For the Germans to chair a meeting-- They just didn't know enough Americans to know who were the promising-- Or who to write letters to to get the promising young people in their field, or know enough about the College Art Association to have a sense of what the meetings would be like. Therefore, these people had much more time for students than their Harvard counterparts would have. Combined with the fact that they didn't have an inherited set of social relationships. They didn't have aunts and uncles and nephews and nieces who were dying and graduating, or whatnot. They were much more available and interested in their graduate students. It was a small group. As I say, it was twenty, and there were six of them. You got to know them. You were filling a gap in some sense in their lives, the way that one never can hope to do with the senior Americans, certainly as an undergraduate. NYU didn't teach undergraduates, so I don't know what the relationship-- Oh, I'm sure Richard Krautheimer teaching at Vassar [College] knew the students well. He was that kind of guy.

I'm thinking here about NYU and methodology. The Harvard professors--and I think it was true of their

generation--wrote books. You knew that Chandler Post had a multivolume history of Spanish fourteenth- and fifteenth-century painting. I did know that volume seven came out in the years I was an undergraduate. But his research was part of his Olympian existence, and it no more entered into your consciousness than you would think to ask yourself how many hours a night Olympian Zeus slept and how many times and how many people he slept with. I mean, there was Zeus, and you were lucky to be with him. You were aware that he was doing these things.

The shock of teaching and studying at NYU came through the papers you were assigned, because this was your first introduction to learned journals. The bibliography was articles. The professors were writing articles, as American professors were not, and this resulted in a quite practical way that the third or fourth year I was there, the graduate students at NYU-- and I was part of this group, of course--started their own learned periodical called Marsyas. So that you had a completely different concept of the accessibility of scholarship. You would write a paper on something new-- you knew that your professor, if he was really interested, could put it in a footnote. It made a very different picture of the learned world. My friend, colleague, and within a year contemporary, Sidney [J.]

Freedberg, who was a year behind me at Harvard and also majored in fine arts, also got his Ph.D. in Harvard, has written books, very good books. I think I can only recall one article, this publication of a work of art that was given to the Fogg [Art] Museum. He's a person whose thinking is in terms of books, as the American professors' thinking was in terms of books. The European professors' was in terms of articles, which didn't mean that they didn't write a book in the end, but it also meant that the character of their research was article minded.

The American thinking, seen in Alfred Barr's case in a way, was you do a big Matisse show with a big, major catalog on it, but you don't make a discovery of an early trip of Matisse to Berlin and six months' worth of painting that showed influence from the de Stijl group. That kind of thing simply fits into a book vision that will come out as part of your achievement, but not something that is-- I won't say rushed into print, but so fascinates you that you sit down and get it in print. The result was in part that the Germans were much more diverse in their interests, in that [Erwin] Panofsky wrote on perspective, but also on Dürer and on iconography. Richard Krautheimer has written a volume in the Pelican series, but his major achievement, of course,



is the early Christian churches and that archaeological thing. He's produced a book on Ghiberti, a book on baroque Rome. I think it was the papacy of Alexander VII. [The Rome of Alexander VII, 1655-1667] All this is a lot more intellectually diverse than Chandler Post's efforts. Post did produce a general history of sculpture [A History of Sculpture] for Harper's [Fine Art Series] and then A History of Spanish Painting. None of this was in terms of bright ideas that would get into a learned journal. It was not intensive observations.

SMITH: What about the question of audience for historians? Was Chandler Post perhaps more concerned with an educated public, as opposed to a specialist public?

COOLIDGE: Partly because his generation was the first where you had enough specialists so that you could have an American learned society in your field. You realize I was never close to him, and I hesitate to generalize too much. The College Art Association started with a joint effort of the departments of Princeton and Harvard, and they even published a joint bulletin and then enlarged it. I don't think he played a part in the field that way. He was different. He was not a joiner.

SMITH: It certainly affects not only what you write about, but how you write, the language you use. You

increasingly target your writing to a smaller group of people with specialized interests.

COOLIDGE: That's right. And thereby hangs a curious bit. I think one will find comparatively few German general histories, and those that there are were the work of Panofsky's father's generation, probably grandfather's generation. With one exception, and that was the book Handbuch der Kunstwissenschaft--I've got a volume; I can show the kind of thing it deals with--which came out in the twenties. Well, I have a volume, and I feel it came to interest me, and I taught-- Which was German baroque, but it's multivolume in German baroque. At least in the twenties, the editorial policy was to seek out really bright thirty-year-olds and let the thirty-year-old do the survey, not the old master do the survey.

One bright thirty-year-old was Nicholas Pevsner, who wrote the volume covering mannerist painting. Well, Pevsner came to England, which had no tradition. It had art historians, but it had no tradition of the teaching of art history. He visualized the Pelican History of Art, as he did The Best Buildings of England, which are both English versions of German publications. There are several things like The Buildings of England, from The Buildings of Germany. Pevsner saw that as his mission. When I met him in the war, he had gotten in touch with



Allen Lane, and we became intimate. It wasn't just an employee relationship, we were real friends. He told me in the dugout which would be his headquarters as an air raid warden about his two projects for after the war.

The really older generation never got involved in that. The generation of Alfred Barr--that's the group ten years older than I am--that is the break. It's the people of Russell Hitchcock, John McAndrew, Alfred Barr, just to name individuals. Meyer Schapiro, Millard Meiss, all those period people would be in the middle to late eighties if they were alive now. This was the group that operated naturally at Pevsner's scale. As a young man, Russell Hitchcock's first book was on modern architecture [Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration]. After that he would do Early Victorian Architecture [in Britain]. That size thing-- It is not until a generation substantially younger than mine that you're getting back to general histories of architecture. People in their forties, or approaching, now-- A couple that have been produced that none of my contemporaries would have done. We certainly wouldn't have done, except for the Pelican history, and that was only because Pevsner turned to America. There were a greater number of American art historians than there were British, and particularly German-trained British, and therefore the Americans



contributed a-- As he frankly said at one point, "I have to be careful of potentially embarrassing a number of authors in the series."

SMITH: Did you ever consider writing something for that series?

COOLIDGE: No. In telling me about it, he was trying me out, but again, at this point I was Italian Renaissance. The significant person was Ludwig Heydenreich, ten years older than my generation, and he teamed up with Wolfgang Lotz. But by that time, my interest had moved into the twentieth century and city planning. Then, of course, the crucial moment: I got involved in the Fogg. I don't know that if I had been approached, I would have wanted to do that, because I'm an article publisher rather than a book publisher. In any case, it was out of the question at the moment. I was director of the Fogg. I became director when I was thirty-four. By that time it was out of the question.

I had thought, and I'd floated this idea to him-- The best, but very inadequate--but partly because it's hopelessly out of date--general history on city planning is in the Handbuch der Kunstwissenschaft. I did actually say to Pevsner once-- Yes, he must have made an offer to me, because I said, "No, but I might be interested in doing a general history of city planning." His reply to



that was, "That kind of topic would have to wait until the Pelican series on the history of art proper has been completed." He didn't deny it, but he didn't feel he could get outside the narrow history of art.

Pevsner, I don't know what his background really was, but the moment he got into these things, he was a financial realist. Indeed, to his surprise and to my surprise, the Pelican History immediately paid for itself, or was clearly going to. Whereas he wondered about that, particularly from an English point of view, and he hadn't been to America much, if at all, until after the war. The Best Buildings of England was a problem financially. He indeed at one point, when I was the director of the Fogg, wrote me and said, "Can you think of any American foundation that would be interested in backing this?" Well, I couldn't. Then he'd gotten the Guinness foundation, or some such thing as that. So these were two trial balloons on his part. He was close to Allen Lane, but Lane was tough about these things. He didn't confuse the friendship with his business relationships. The idea of my contributing just didn't come up. I very much doubt that I would have been-- Well, that isn't the way my mind works.

SMITH: It would have been interesting to have a volume on city planning. Still, it has to strike me that the

main teachers that you've mentioned, the people that you were institutionally affiliated with, Panofsky, [Walter] Friedlaender, were not architectural historians, particularly.

COOLIDGE: Yes. One person has fallen through a crack here. The Columbia architectural school was a little chaotic, because they lost the dean who really created it and got them going. But they permitted would-be architects to take courses that were certainly not strictly part of an International style, of a Bauhaus training. A man named Talbot Hamlin, who was librarian of the Avery Library [Columbia University], which Europeans say is the finest architectural library in the world-- And certainly from an American point of view, you don't say, "Oh, I wish that I could be working at the RIBA [Royal Institute of British Architects] library." It's a first-rate library. He was librarian of that. His field was American architecture, and he was offering a seminar on American architecture that year. I took that seminar. Then he and his wife became very good friends of ours, so that Talbot, whose point of view seemed to me to be on the whole very primitive, was there to bat things out with, and I talked to him a good deal.

I left New York to go to Princeton. We found that Princeton was just such a wonderful place to live, and



above all for our daughter [Penny Coolidge]. I was either through or almost through my course requirements at NYU, so I simply spent the rest of my graduate study at NYU, but living in Princeton. I remember Talbot Hamlin coming down for the Easter weekend one year to our house. Polly reminded me that he withdrew from us and spent Easter morning painting Easter eggs with our daughter--which was like him. [laughter] This was the kind of relationship we had. He was architect trained.

John McAndrew, strange to say for a person who was well in their thirties-- John hadn't found himself. He was not then a scholar. He didn't think. He was an accumulator of information that could be used for his teaching and that could be used ultimately in a scholarly fashion, but he didn't see himself writing books. He wrote two books, in fact, at the end of his life, but this was a long time ahead. He became the curator of architecture at the Museum of Modern Art. That was much more the kind of thing that he visualized for himself. Oh, we knew him well, but not really in a close friend way like Russell Hitchcock and Talbot Hamlin were. This is part of the total picture, but since we're mentioning this, later on I got to know Fiske Kimball really well.

SMITH: Yes, I've been planning to ask you about him.

COOLIDGE: That can wait until the appropriate time. For

the record--and I don't mind being on the record--I'm a pupil of Richard Krautheimer. I learned at least as much from Karl Lehmann, plus Panofsky and Friedlaender. Those are the other ones I can think of. So that it was the ambient that was there. One knew what all those people were doing by reading articles that they were publishing.

SMITH: On Panofsky, did you spend time at the Institute for Advanced Study while you were living in Princeton?

Were you able to share in Panofsky's environment there?

COOLIDGE: We didn't. My impression was--and here you have to look into the history of the Institute--it was started with mathematics. Pan was an exception. There was, I think, a classical epigrapher--maybe that's putting too narrow an interpretation. My father [Julian Lowell Coolidge] was professor of mathematics. One of them [Marsden Morse] had been a younger man here in the department, and we got to know him well there. The Institute was not clubish. It was completely welcoming, but it was really a group of individuals. The mathematicians may have gotten together and talked. In a professional sense, Panofsky had nobody to talk to. I don't think there was anybody in general history. Panofsky had no problems spending an evening with an epigrapher, but on the other hand, it was not the sort of thing that was rewarding at a weekly lunch.

SMITH: Of course he had the Princeton Index of Christian Art there as a resource.

COOLIDGE: Oh, as a resource there was that. Christian Index, of course, were very dreary people.

SMITH: Oh, really?

COOLIDGE: Well, they were as dreary as the-- They were young, our age, nobody over forty, and they were as dreary as the dreariest librarians. [laughter] Some of them we were very fond of and we have kept up with, like the girl Kay Sorell. She married Jim [James J.] Rorimer. We saw them later in life. But basically, no, this was not a lively place at all.

SMITH: You had mentioned that you went to Princeton to study Flemish painting with Panofsky, and it struck me that you had said that you had turned to him for connoisseurship. Yet certainly connoisseurship is not what one normally associates with Panofsky. You got me thinking that there's obviously this other Panofsky besides the iconographical Panofsky or the Panofsky of Renaissances and Renascences, the Panofsky that we now normally focus on.

COOLIDGE: I was overwhelmed by Panofsky, so I spent a year with Panofsky. My father graduated from Harvard and went to do graduate school at Baliol [College, Oxford University] and taught school and came back home and



started in as instructor of, whatever, mathematics and then went to-- Starting in Turin, ended up getting his doctorate at Bonn. Now, my brother [Archibald Cary Coolidge] went to Baliol, went into school teaching, and then went back. The reason I could go to New Hampshire in his summer house was because he was getting his doctorate at Trinity College, Dublin. But for Hitler, I almost certainly would have been trained in Europe, probably in Germany. The reason that I went to study with Panofsky was to study the European method. I couldn't have formulated that.

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COOLIDGE: No, it was simply to do that. Curious how little practicalities affect life, because I was paid by Vassar.

SMITH: At the time.

COOLIDGE: We had a baby who was born in New York, who was three years old, and an apartment that we could afford. I used the Vassar money to hire the living room in the apartment above me, one of the rooms--it was the front room--and while I was teaching, two years teaching, I had my own place to work. Coming back, particularly as I finished my course work, the next thing would be work of my own. It would be, in some sense, much more work at home. It just seemed tough, if you're going to work at home, to keep Polly and Penny out of the-- It was a railroad apartment, and what we used as the living room was next to the living-dining room next to the kitchen, and then a tiny room for Penny. And then a front room, a nice front room overlooking that park by Gracie Mansion. What we used as the living room was right in the middle of things. The child having meals-- And at that point, one could afford help, and so we did have help. On the other hand, if I took the front room, that was pretty

hard on Polly to have this rather miserable room, [laughter] which was all right for a living room at night, but not in the daytime. That light, well, I think-- So this would come down a step in the way of life, and Panofsky and going to Princeton seemed like a liberation. When we got there, the whole pattern of life was so much better. We paid probably less money for the little house we had, and the little house had a garden. The whole thing worked much better as a family operation with a growing child, you know.

SMITH: I was wondering-- In "Three Decades of American Art History," the article that Panofsky wrote in the mid-fifties, he said much of his basic way of thinking about academia and--

COOLIDGE: I haven't read it for years. I'd forgotten it existed.

SMITH: I was wondering if he and you ever talked, or if he talked to the students, comparing German academic life and American academic life, and what kinds of observations he might have made about the pluses and the minuses of both, or either.

COOLIDGE: As far as I was concerned, an absolute no. Fundamentally because we were--I was, but I think I could say we were--so overwhelmed by the superiority of their education. Hell, one did occasionally get into

education. Does Edgar Wind mean anything to you? Well, I once asked Edgar Wind, "When was the time in your life when you worked hardest?" Edgar Wind's reaction was one that the refugees have all backed up. "Oh," they said, and Edgar Wind said, "in Gymnasium. I still have nightmares about my Greek professor in the Gymnasium."

Another thing, we ran down our own education. We assumed that it would be embarrassing for the Germans. They would go to great lengths to praise the education we had, and we figured that they were doing it so as to not hurt our feelings. I mean, this is what prevented any formal or sustained pursuit of this. In fact they would genuinely volunteer out of a blue sky how much they admired American education. I mean that one of the things that absolutely staggered them was that we produced Marsyas. That was inconceivable to them that a group of graduate students could go out and raise the money and do this, because it was unbelievable in the German system.

I got to know Richard [Krautheimer] well enough and asked him about this. He thought hard, and it was hard for him to explain. He said it was not that Germany wasn't democratic, "But we were completely unprepared for a kind of day-to-day working of democracy. That you could have a student club"--as we did--"and a group of



you could be officers of the club, could organize the thing. That on occasion general discussion comes up. You have no shyness about standing up and giving your opinion about, what will we say, about the problem of the Kurds or the next Democratic candidate. And this way we weren't completely prepared for you students as democratic human beings." And that was their genuine reaction.

We were completely unprepared for their prodigious knowledge and for their friendliness and for, above all, the freshness of their minds. There were other German refugees whom one knew, like Martin Weinberger--I think I took a course with him--who didn't have fresh minds. There were other Americans, like Meyer Schapiro, who did have fresh minds. Meyer Schapiro, though he never studied at NYU, was completely in the same boat. I think I told you about a review he wrote of the Vienna school, which I have to chase down. But, no, that didn't come up in terms of a kind of embarrassment there.

Richard was asked-- One of us asked him after the war--he didn't say this to me, and that's an accident; I can perfectly well hear myself asking and him answering-- "Would you go back?" Because he was younger, a generation younger than Panofsky. He said, "No. One of the great problems with the relationship I had to my



German colleagues who did not vocally stand up against Hitler-- It's not the ones who were taken with Nazism that would give me trouble; it's the ones of whose profound democracy I cannot feel assured."

There was one individual who completely survived that, and that was Heydenreich. He didn't emigrate, but the émigrés, oh, from the word go, knew that he was the son of a general and, I think, probably a Junker. [They] may have had a kind of super Beacon Hill snobbishness to all these Nazis. But, in any case, it practically amounted to the same thing. He was completely accepted. There was never any question. The Hitler period, he was working in Florence.

You asked about Paul Frankl. Of course, one summer's intensive German, with three courses, was not enough. Our answer to my question would be, as graduate students-- And I think that almost any American would answer that, barring conditions in wartime and you can go working ten hours a day for a week or something like that-- For a steady year's work, I think almost everybody works harder in medical school or law school than at any other time in life, certainly than in any younger time in life. So the summer of '38 we were going to Europe, and to a German-speaking Europe, and really get beyond what we had picked up. The Nazis were well in, so we were

planning on Austria. And then this month, as I remember, Hitler invaded Austria. Why Switzerland didn't come up as a possibility, I don't know. We might not have felt we could afford it, but I don't really know. Switzerland was as expensive then as it's ever been since. Well, in any case it didn't. And Austria was clearly out, because it was in the process of being taken over in the summer. I remember going to whomever one went to--it might have been Lehmann, it might have been Friedlaender, it might have been both--saying, "Look, we planned to do this. This is an intellectual justification, but we hesitate because it means, any way you figure it, giving the Nazis American dollars." And I think it was Friedlaender who said, "You will of course be visiting the friends we left behind. It will matter so much more to them to meet a young American couple who knows us, who is in the field, than the few dollars you spend will mean to the Nazis. By all means go." And so we went and picked Munich. The first person whom we were given a letter for was Paul Frankl. And Paul Frankl's youngest daughter, Regula, spent an afternoon with us every week just to visit. We would go to the country and see a monument and go out fishing and to the park. Speaking German, having an all-day German lesson.

This is a waste of time, but it is so extraordinary.



We had the name of a good German teacher from America, and we got there-- They were academics and older than us, let's say forty-year-olds. We almost certainly got in touch with them before we went, and then wrote them in Munich and got a nice letter back saying, "We expected you, and we're terribly sorry to have to say that my husband and I have been called away to Italy for the summer. We can't do this." We said, "Well, do you have another name? Can you recommend anybody?" And they recommended a Fräulein Hüsserl.

Fräulein Hüsserl was eighty. She had a tiny apartment. The apartment was filled with photographs, signed greetings to her, from all sorts of people, the most conspicuous one being the pope. It soon emerged that Fräulein Hüsserl was the most devout and orthodox of passionate Catholics, but the pope, the then pope, Pius XII, had been papal nuncio to Germany, and she had given him German lessons when he was papal nuncio. She was surely one of the last of the royal governesses, and she was caught in World War I teaching German to the Romanovs.

She was a marvelous teacher. One of her things was-- It seems to me that this is such an intelligent thing to do. You know that in our language and in hers-- I think I would use for plurals in our language generally "s,"



but there are a group of nouns that don't have their plurals in "s" and they change in plural. It's a perfectly random group. Well, she took a phenomenon, and I cannot remember what the German thing was, but shall we say nouns that take the ablative under certain conditions. She handed those to us and she said, "Tomorrow, when you come back, I want you to write in German a short story that uses all these words." Of course, they were perfectly random. It was such a literary challenge to make a brief story that included all this wild group of conjunctions that in a sense you never forgot--you certainly never forgot that that unlikely noun had been in the story you wrote.

She said she'd been in prison in three different countries. Of course in Russia. The Nazis had imprisoned her, and she said the pope had interceded and got her out. And she said, "I was a prisoner in France." I said, "France? What did you do to get in prison in France?" "Oh," she said, "in the middle of the first war the international Red Cross came to Germany and said the French have captured so many German prisoners of war that they are completely unable to handle the simplest nursing requirements. And we, the Red Cross, are asking for German young women, German volunteers, to take care of German prisoners of war in France."



She had so many stories, all told in German, that were staggering. She wouldn't let us have common lessons. She insisted on-- Which was terribly smart. We sort of thought that she was pulling our leg. She was a marvelous woman. She was flawless in English. And I said, "Well, you must speak many languages. Do you speak English the best?" She said, "No, no, it really isn't the best. The best is my Romanian." [laughter] And when she told this story about the prisoners-- That was after Polly and I had had our conversation. And she looked at my face and she said, "Oh, you're puzzled by this story. Move back." I slid back. She pulled out the drawer of her desk. It was covered with letters with royal monograms and the like, the least of which being that "His majesty of Bavaria has asked me to write you." Many of them coming from grand dukes themselves to her. And all signed, perfectly genuine things, and intermingled with professors, people she'd known or people who had taught her at the university. So it wasn't showing off. Only she had just kept these things, and they happened to be in the drawer. We believed everything she said after that! [laughter]

Well, this was how we got to know Paul Frankl. Poor Frankl stayed in-- This is all beside the point, but this won't be long. Paul Frankl stayed in Germany, because



they had several children, four or five, and one of the daughters was either retarded or lacking-- In any case, a condition with which she couldn't possibly get into this country. Though she was in an institution in Germany, they refused to leave Germany without her. Fortunately, she died, and they were then able to come. But by the time he came, he was already too old; he was well into his seventies.

Pan [Panofsky] got an appointment, a year's appointment, for him at the Institute [for Advanced Study] and assumed that he couldn't get anything more than that and really was wondering what he could do. He hit on the idea that maybe he could persuade some of the really wealthy people in Princeton--and there were plenty of Morgan partners and people like that--to put up the money for a professorship for Frankl, which he would be paid out of capital, not out of income. It wasn't a million dollars; it was, shall we say, \$200,000. And he would be paid \$20,000 a year, or whatever. Then it would be exhausted.

But in order to do that, he thought that Frankl should give a popular lecture to which all these potential people, the Nassau Street crowd, if you know Princeton--the Brattle Street crowd here [in Cambridge, Massachusetts]--would be invited, and that was laid on.



I think Frankl's doctorate may have been on stained glass. Although he was an architectural historian, it remained a field of interest. His lecture was to be on stained glass, and that was fine.

Pan said to him the day before the lecture that "Of course you've spoken English all your scholarly life. I know it's flawless. But, really, this is America, and there are differences in usage. Wouldn't it be wise if you let me show your manuscript to one of the graduate students here that would point out any phrases that might not be understood?" And Frankl absolutely refused. "No, no, I'm going to read this, and I'm sure there will be no difficulty."

Well, the lecture was about a stained glass window with a great, important medallion. Everybody recognized this stained glass window, and his lecture was on tracing the sources and showing the influences. So the lecture kept coming back to this one medallion. The medallion showed the marriage of the Virgin to Joseph, which, for the whole lot, Paul Frankl referred to as the "copulation" of Joseph and Mary. [laughter] And Kopulation is "betrothal" in German.

I knew him and liked him. A remarkable experience-- They had a group of Jewish friends who met for afterdinner coffee once a week, and they invited us to



come. There were something like six couples, or four couples and three unmarried men, perhaps some unmarried women. Perhaps ten, twelve people came, all Jewish, all professional people--I won't swear they were all academics. Each one had been assigned a country. You were to read the Swiss papers and the Swiss Atlantic Monthly or Harper's. She was to read the Austrian papers. He would do the Italian. Then at these meetings, each one would report on, essentially, military news. I mean, Poland's report, or anything that they had gotten that week from those papers. They were the most fantastically well informed people that I've ever been with. It was typical of the kind of way of life that they made this the occasion for a social occasion among themselves.

SMITH: One of the peculiar aspects of their coming to a place like Princeton and finding refuge there is that they come at the height of the period when American universities were the most anti-Semitic, and you have quota systems and difficulties in hiring.

COOLIDGE: I hadn't thought of that.

SMITH: Was there any problem of that sort, that affected the individuals that you knew?

COOLIDGE: Firmly, and absolutely firmly, absolutely not. The Institute of Fine Arts was a place apart. The New

York University was proud of it. Oh, we never ran into that. Harvard [University] had that problem in the early twenties, but I've only come to think-- I think Harvard was the first place to accept the New York haute-juiverie, and that's why you have a Strauss Hall and a Lehman Hall, which you don't at Princeton and you don't at Yale [University]. My father was forty when I was born. The men who gave those halls were my parents' generation--a little younger than he. The Harvard tradition had been completely non-anti-Semitic. An unhappy episode about 1920. Princeton University was lapsed Christian gentlemen, and pretty much that. We had got to know a young man in classics, terribly nice guy, again older than we. He told us that he had received an offer of a, well, shall we say an assistant professorship, or an associate professor, a promotion, at another American university with a great increase in salary. He didn't want to go. He loved the Princeton department. He said he went to the chairman, told him about this, and he said, "You're mad. You don't mean to tell me you're trying to live on what we pay you!" [laughter] This was Princeton. Both Christian gentlemen. There was a lack of picturesque refugees, an occasional Chinaman.

SMITH: I wanted to ask you about student life at NYU.



You've mentioned Marsyas, but the social life amongst the students, the intellectual sharing amongst the students-- I presume this is limited to the twelve or twenty serious students. Were there people you felt particularly close to in terms of perspective while you were there? Or relationships that have continued professionally as you went to the Fogg? Perhaps some of the relationships that continued--

COOLIDGE: The twelve, twenty, or whatever, were all fond of each other. We were all more or less broke. And we had a great diversity of backgrounds. Far greater diversity, shall I say, than Harvard. I don't know what I mean by this. This meant that people lived all over the city. And you were working so hard that you really only saw a guy who you liked very much, who was living in the Bronx, when you happened to be using the same library and went out to lunch together. One did not get intimate with them, and I don't really know why, but you got together to cooperate in any way.

The one thing that they did have was a Christmas party, in which the students put on terribly funny parodies of the professors. This was a sort of legendary occasion. Well, you were careful about the sensibilities of the professors, but you could get away with a lot more among the twelve or the twenty than you could with an



assemblage from the two hundred. So those people didn't get invited to the party, or we were not aware of them there. I can't remember enough. I've given you so much irrelevant personal stuff here. One question that the party professors would ask--and Panofsky was among them-- "Name the twelve apostles." It took three of the professors to name the twelve. It was that kind of thing. Friedlaender had spent-- Or was it Karl Lehmann? I don't know. It was one of those professors, one of them. I suppose I'm talking partly about favorite professors; the ones I've mentioned were favorites. He gave a whole seminar, we'll say based on Caravaggio. He had a new interpretation of The Entombment, or something like that, and talked about it repeatedly, and it would come up in student papers. They had a slide made of about a quarter of the picture and threw it on the screen, and he couldn't identify it at all. The kids who'd been there, even had participated in the seminar, had been told--or had it whispered to them--what it was going to be. You were kidding people in that kind of a way. That was the one thing that formally brought everybody together.

For us, Russell Hitchcock, Alfred Barr, Agnes Mongan were much more real. Partly because they had salaries to go out to dinner; they could afford it. The guy from the



Bronx, to ask him out to dinner was getting into something that you didn't know. It would be embarrassing to ask, implying you were asking could he afford it. But, yes, an enormous awareness of each one's career.

One graduate who was six years younger than I, so I came to know him at the end of my career at NYU, and knew him well, became a colleague at Harvard. That's James [S.] Ackerman, and I've stayed close to James Ackerman ever since. I saw him in Rome. I remember my first trip to Rome after the war, he was there still as a graduate student working on his dissertation. He was married then, and I remember dining at their apartment. Kept up. And a rather unusual thing, that his wife, who was a ballet dancer, was stricken with polio, and was one of the last-- You probably may know this. In any case, after she died, he married again, and they have had a child, a child who is, in terms of months, younger than my great-grandson. I've never heard of quite that much split between generations, but it's still very real.

SMITH: For instance, when Craig Hugh Smyth went to the Villa i Tatti, was that in part influenced by the fact that he was from the Institute?

COOLIDGE: Well, there were three people in the Harvard department who were involved in Renaissance art. Jim Ackerman knew him because they'd both been doing work in



the sixteenth century. I had known him as a graduate student in Princeton and had kept up. And he had become a very good friend of Sidney [J.] Freedberg, who was the professor here who was closest to him, so that-- Sidney himself turned it down. Whether that was entirely genuine or not, I don't know. But in any case, Sidney wouldn't have been appointed--I'm not prepared to say that he would have wanted it. But a very close friend in Craig Smyth would be a choice then. But though I was Harvard's representative with Villa i Tatti between my appointment to the Fogg and [Bernard] Berenson's death-- Anytime we went to Italy, we would go to there. We were in occasional correspondence, but friendly correspondence. I don't remember my opinion being asked. It may have been. I just have a feeling that Craig Hugh Smyth was such an obvious choice, particularly as nobody understood at that point that there was any fund-raising involved, and he was so glad to get out of that aspect of the Institute [of Fine Arts, New York University]. That, of course, struck him from behind.

SMITH: Did you have any relationship with Donald Egbert at Princeton? Did that develop at the time you were--?

COOLIDGE: Yes.

SMITH: You met him while you were living there.

COOLIDGE: I met him when I was living there. It did not



continue after the war, I'm afraid, because-- Perhaps you don't realize-- Technically he wasn't a cripple.

Actually, his health was so delicate that he was crippled. He didn't travel. By the time I knew him he didn't. He must have traveled as a younger man. Not that he was old when I knew him. So if you didn't get to Princeton, you didn't see Don--you wouldn't meet him elsewhere--and those were fairly rare occasions when I got to Princeton. We may have exchanged letters, but there was not much basis for continuing the relationship, particularly as he had dropped his interest in the beaux arts. I was about to say he was interested in the history of architecture, and I think that's right. Yes. What had happened there was he didn't drop that, but he was interested in society and the arts and was working on socialism in American art and that kind of thing.

SMITH: He did his thesis on the avant-garde.

COOLIDGE: That kind of thing. We were not unsympathetic, but it was not the kind of thing that would naturally pull us together.

SMITH: Perhaps that was what I was curious about, because yesterday you were talking about your leftish inclinations in the thirties, and if that had been--

COOLIDGE: He had arrived at that. He was doing a study of an illuminated manuscript for his dissertation. Then



he got into the beaux-arts thing. Then he moved into more contemporary art and social problems.

SMITH: You were founding vice president of the Society of Architectural Historians. How did that happen? At that point, you hadn't even finished your master's work.

COOLIDGE: [Kenneth J.] Conant was the only person teaching architectural history, and I was an undergraduate. All undergraduates who wished to pursue architectural history thoroughly had to study with him. Now, if you became a graduate student working towards a Ph.D., you, like all of us, were indigent. You had to earn a living, and the only time you could work on your doctorate was in the summer. So there was a group of young architectural historians around, mostly common pupils, but by no means all of them. For the simple reason that in summer this had the least objectionable climate of any good library that there was. No one would spend their summer working in the Avery if they could come to Cambridge.



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COOLIDGE: A certain number of your graduates were married. The professors were apt to be married, and the teaching was strictly on a five-day week. Some of the graduate students wanted to have some time with their wives and kids, so they would not be around Saturday or Sunday. And the libraries were simply not open Saturday and Sunday. So these people who were working on their Ph.D. thesis couldn't do much on Saturday and Sunday. The whole group got together, and they would go and visit local monuments on perhaps one of those two days. At least the year before, it was founded. George Hanfmann, who was here [Harvard University], was a young instructor--had archaeological training and was, again, a universal European, interested in these things--played a part in one of these groups. For reasons that are unclear, some very serious people-- A man who was either already dean of an architectural school or about to become so, Rexford Newcomb, was here. This got to be the thing to do. I think it was Hanfmann that suggested that "Let's have dinner together." They had dinner at the faculty club, and they talked about doing something, but they didn't do it. The next year they came back. That



year I was in London. It all went the same way.

My mother-in-law had a place outside Newburyport [Massachusetts], and we could commute by train, so that Polly [Welch Coolidge] and Penny [Coolidge] were out there with her. I did not participate in the Saturday and Sunday things, because I was with them. But when they had the dinner together, I joined, because I had known many of these people. I was part of this group.

The leader was Turpin [C.] Bannister. Turpin's family were not nearby, so he was always around, and he got [Kenneth J.] Conant to join us. Conant wasn't here every summer, because he was in Cluny a lot. That summer he was, and Conant agreed to talk about the history of architecture as it had been taught at Harvard. Conant's talk, I may say, hid more than it revealed of the tension between the people who were under German influence, including the refugees, and the people who were not, notably Conant. It was completely obscure, Conant's talk. [laughter]

So, casually, but not accidentally, Turpin suddenly said, "We all had fun at these meetings. Why don't we form a society?" That was agreed might be a good idea. Then there was a second meeting. This time Conant was in the chair. He asked Turpin and myself to talk to the group about our own research work. Turpin talked about



metal in eighteenth-century architecture. I think I talked about the Villa Giulia, but I may have been talking about Lowell [Massachusetts]. No, I talked about Lowell. Then we decided on action, and we agreed that we would found this thing. Turpin was very much the leader. He said, "Well, I'll be secretary general." Conant would obviously be honorary president, if not president, and Turpin would do all the work. We said, "Well, that's fine, but look this is going to be a hundred dollars or more." And we all checked in a dollar to Turpin for postage. Among his papers is a recognition and listing of the names of people who had contributed a dollar to that.

By this time I was living in Princeton, and for reasons I don't know, I went back to Princeton, and there was another meeting of the group. I got a letter from Turpin, presumably in early September, saying that they had decided to found a journal. I remember distinctly thinking that this was premature. I didn't think it was wrong. If Turpin was going to do all the work, fine, but did we really have the drive to get this journal? But they had met, and they had decided that a journal it was. And that was that.

I do not remember anything about this, but Turpin's records show a Boston-Cambridge chapter was founded. It

was the first chapter. I've forgotten the name of the man who was chairman of that, who was president or whatever it was called, whom I knew. I was not present at that meeting. That may have taken place a year later. These things were all in the SAH journal [Society of Architectural Historians Journal].

SMITH: I suppose what may be the more pertinent question is why architectural historians felt a need to separate themselves from art historians at this time. It seems like in your own case, you're actually going in somewhat the opposite direction.

COOLIDGE: That's right. Remember that Kenneth was an architect. George Hanfmann was not particularly an architectural historian; he was an archaeologist. He was primarily an art historian, but more an archaeologist than an architectural historian. I don't mean to imply that he didn't know his architectural history. He did, but he would never write a book on it, whereas he did happily get into digging. It was an adult and varied group. I think the feeling was that art history was a little precious. It was no accident that Harvard's architectural history was taught by somebody who was officially paid by the school of architecture, not by the fine arts department. There was this feeling that they had that art historians are a little academic and a

little precious.

Turpin was an architect. He came from upstate New York, although he graduated, got his architectural degree, from Columbia [University]. And though he was a complete mingler, I think he felt himself somehow a little outside of the eastern seaboard. Art history as applied to architecture, hadn't it the danger of being precious? What he chose as his whole intellectual life though, historical, was structural rather than stylist. He had designed and built his own house, and possibly one other, but I don't think more than three buildings. On the other hand, what he moved into, and what he must have been trying to give the cast in his mind-- He was very interested in teaching. Eventually he got a medal from the American Institute of Architects, not only for his direct work as a teacher, but for conferences that he would organize on teaching architectural art. What is the place of architectural history in the training of an architect, things of that sort. So it was a different crowd from the College Art Association crowd. And from the start. Again, I was the other half of it and thoroughly in the other half of it, though I did get into teaching. I really got outside of exclusive concern with architecture after I got into the Fogg [Art Museum], but wasn't all that much a painting historian or a sculpture

historian. I think everybody felt close to Turpin. I would certainly consider him very much a friend.

SMITH: There's a big question related to this. Why have so many of the advances in art history in the mid-century been connected with architectural history? This relates to the seven people that you've named. I don't know if you want to get into that at this moment. [tape recorder off]

Okay, when we left off, I think I was asking you about the reasons you might think that architectural history has been so innovative, not just in its own self, but within the whole field of art history in the mid-twentieth century. And you had mentioned, in a sense, the seven principal figures that preceded your generation.

COOLIDGE: Surely part of it was the atrophied situation a generation earlier. The most vivid testimony to this was Fiske Kimball, who was a man of the highest intelligence. This tended to be hidden by his explosive, exuberant personality, but when you could bring it out, when you could turn to it, it was a remarkable intelligence. And he said this twice to me, sadly, "I came to [Heinrich] Wölfflin too late." He realized the change that was taking place in art history.

Parenthetically, I could argue that he was the most



distinguished American-born art historian of his generation. That's a debatable one, but I wouldn't feel put upon if I had to defend that position. He realized that there was a new way of looking at works of art and that he was, for whatever reason, not flexible enough to take it in.

[Paul] Frankl's first book--I believe it was his first book--was an effort to apply Wölfflin to architecture [Die Entwicklungsphasen der neueren Baukunst]. It was very interesting reading and intellectually quite stimulating--I just read it in translation for the first time this year, in preparation for the College Art Association--but pedestrian in the lack of at least emotional involvement with buildings. It was all on a mathematical level, not a passionate involvement with works of art.

It is possible--this idea has only just occurred to me, but it would be worth exploring--that the contact of academic art historians and curatorial art historians had something to do with the development of art history of painting and sculpture, the art history of decorative art. There were, of course, the architect architectural historians, who still continue, in a way, but Conant was in some sense the end of that line in this country. It's not strictly true. Henry [A.] Millon and Paul Turner



both have architectural degrees. I think it is the impact of looking for a post-[Alois] Riegl, post-Wölfflin, post-[Aby] Warburg [approach], and architectural history had simply been bypassed. That presented the opportunity of growth. It's also puzzling that the daily life school of history had not yet fructified architectural history very deeply. The study of patronage has not gotten deep into architectural history. My own hunch is that both of these are areas in which it will grow. Some of the discovery aspect of the thing was common to the other arts. The Alfred Barr generation were the first people in painting and sculpture as well as architecture. Though I can't think of a painting discovery school that is parallel to what John Summerson has done or what Richard Krautheimer did with familiar areas.

SMITH: In terms of reinterpreting?

COOLIDGE: Reinterpreting so that it is a transforming reinterpretation. That is puzzling. But, by the way, and just to toss this into the record because I'd like it to be in the record-- Historians of American sculpture and painting are historians of American sculpture and painting. They have no professional distinction beyond that. But beginning at least with Fiske Kimball, historians of American architecture, or some of them, or



perhaps even one might say the best of them, cannot be so described. To describe them that way would ignore the equally, if not more, distinguished work that they've done on European architecture. I mean, it would be ridiculous to describe [Henry-]Russell Hitchcock as an historian of American architecture, which is not to say that he wasn't an excellent one. The same is true of Fiske Kimball, and it goes right the way down to-- Paul Turner's the youngest one I happen to know. Jim [James F.] O'Gorman. You can think of a dozen examples. The curious thing is that you can't find the same phenomenon in painting. None of the historians of American painting is recognized by Europeans in any sense as an expert in non-American painting. The same goes for sculpture and, as far as I know, decorative arts. However, that isn't the full answer to this. I haven't given the question enough thought. There are, as it were, shifts of taste or a shift of intellectual fashion. One cannot explain-- or I cannot explain--the paucity of the French contribution to architectural history in the mid twentieth century. I wish I could get further with that-- hell of a good question.

SMITH: Well, maybe we'll return to it.

COOLIDGE: That's an amazing question. I mean, the other part of the thing being, in a certain sense aspects of



the traditional history of painting were exhausted by the brilliance of a [Erwin] Panofsky. To me, at least, I've never run into any studies of iconography since his that were thrilling. Not that it doesn't have potential, but it doesn't have potential for our time. Obviously, in the abstract it has potential. It's harder to answer the question about the discovery thing.

SMITH: One of the aspects of a paradigm, of a successful paradigm, is that it sparks the work of a whole other group of people, a whole other generation, to test the limits of the paradigm, to go and apply it in various places.

COOLIDGE: That's right.

SMITH: I think, as we mentioned this morning--we were not on tape--that you had the founding figures of architectural history, who created between them a framework for analyzing architecture that was extremely productive for your generation.

COOLIDGE: Yes. Yes, that's right.

SMITH: That seems in great contrast with Panofsky. I mean, Panofsky was brilliant, but--

COOLIDGE: Terminal, in some sense. Yes. Well, at this point I have a little of the feeling that it may not be very profitable to pursue this line of thinking unless one knows a lot more than I do about parallel fields,



like the history of music or the history of literature. And have there been moments, or approaches, that were exhausted, or even fields that were exhausted, and has there been anything parallel to the reevaluation in the teaching of literature.

SMITH: Well, [F. O.] Matthiessen is often pointed to as the person who made us rethink antebellum American literature.

COOLIDGE: That could be. Yes, that's true. Next question please!

SMITH: Let's move on. I wanted to go on to the development of your dissertation, Vignola. First I'd like to get the timetable clear. When you decided on your dissertation topic and whether you first decided on a period or on the figure.

COOLIDGE: To interpose some history of art history that I learned from the horse's mouth but I've never heard repeated: the German refugees told me that there was an enormous difference in outlook, but also, perhaps primarily, in professional situation, between those like Panofsky who had finished their doctorate before World War I and those who had not and who came back to university life in the Weimar period, who lost more than four years that way. There's something of a parallel in this country on World War II. Well, I'd certainly



finished all the hard work of my doctorate before April, roughly April 1943, when I went into uniform. I can't remember, there may have been a chapter--it may have been one of these studies of Vignola--that I had to write afterwards, but the guts had been behind me. This is disguised by the fact that I got out of uniform in '46. I had some time to work on the doctorate, and then of course I was teaching, beginning in the fall of '47. No, that's wrong. I completed the work of the doctorate in '47 and should have had my degree in '47, but there was a foul-up on the regulations. You had to present a condensed version, the précis of your dissertation, when you submitted the dissertation itself. And the word précis for me meant something not much more than a page in length, and they expected something like ten pages in length. The result was I didn't get my doctorate for another year. I'm not sure that NYU [New York University] awarded doctorates in the middle of the year. In any case, I had done the work years before I got the degree. So the guts of my dissertation were done before the war.

The general examination at NYU at that period was monumental. It was well known that Millard Meiss had spent eighteen months doing nothing but prepare for his general exam. So for a the substantial period in the



early forties, I was preparing for my generals. But I think the Institute of Fine Arts was feeling guilty and felt that it was absurd for a person who was as gifted and as accomplished as Millard Meiss to spend eighteen months passing an examination. I can't remember much of mine, except that Walter Friedlaender told me--and I think was permitted to tell me, it was not an indiscretion--that I would be asked to write about mannerism in architecture. That probably, as the exam approached-- I won't say at the beginning of the potential eighteen-month period I knew that was going to be the question, but toward the end I did, and that substantially is all I can remember writing about. But there may have been other things too.

After my M.A. thesis was out of the way, which was, as I remember it, '39-- Unconsciously I'd been aware of the one foot on either side of the Atlantic tradition in American architectural history, partly because it was a family tradition. I realized that I wanted to do serious work in European architecture. It so happened that I'd taken one of Leonard Opdycke's courses on baroque architecture. I'd taken the one on Italian Renaissance and baroque, or later Renaissance and baroque. I was intrigued by the Villa Giulia, and I had a term paper to write for a course with Walter Friedlaender, I think on



painting in the second half of the sixteenth century or on mannerist painting, something of that sort. I asked him if I could write about the Villa Giulia. I started looking into it as a possible subject, and that worked out. Then I don't remember the sequence, but I think the next thing that occurred to me was suddenly to realize that, as far as I was concerned, the little domes on Saint Peter's, which had always been attributed to Michelangelo--not very strongly, but it was assumed that the [Jacques] Du Peraq represented Michelangelo's vision--could not possibly have been designed by him and were designed by Vignola. I think that was in the second issue of Marsyas. Then I also started looking at the loggie on the Campidoglio, and before I knew it, I got involved, I guess just by having concentrated on Vignola for the Villa Giulia, into following other Vignola subjects. But when I did the Villa Giulia, I had no intention of sitting down and doing a Vignola thesis. That was just the way the accidents happened. Once they had happened, the alternative was to develop that into a thesis or to start from scratch on an American subject. I didn't at that time have an American subject that particularly intrigued me. I could have done a Gothic revival in America and extended the thing chronologically or typologically, getting churches and houses and other



buildings. But it still seemed too limited a way to approach American architecture, and the other aspects hadn't struck me yet.

SMITH: By that time either the war had already started or it was clear that it was starting any week. It didn't concern you that you would not be able to go to Italy either to do research or to do direct study of the monuments?

COOLIDGE: Well, I think it probably concerned me, but nobody else was getting to Europe. And the Villa Giulia [article] having been accepted by the Art Bulletin, it gave one the feeling that you could get away with it. Also, the feeling which was in the air-- It would be putting it too far to say it was encouraged by the faculty, but the sort of attitude was, "Well, it's only a thesis." I'd published a book and I'd gotten one article published, and I didn't doubt that I could publish something else--it didn't have to be my thesis. But I had enough confidence in myself as an architectural historian so that that fact disturbed me less then than it would now. Now I think I wouldn't direct a student's thesis that had that fact. I don't think it should have been allowed for me, with the exception of saying that that confines you to America, and it wasn't as if you were a George [A.] Kubler who could go down over the



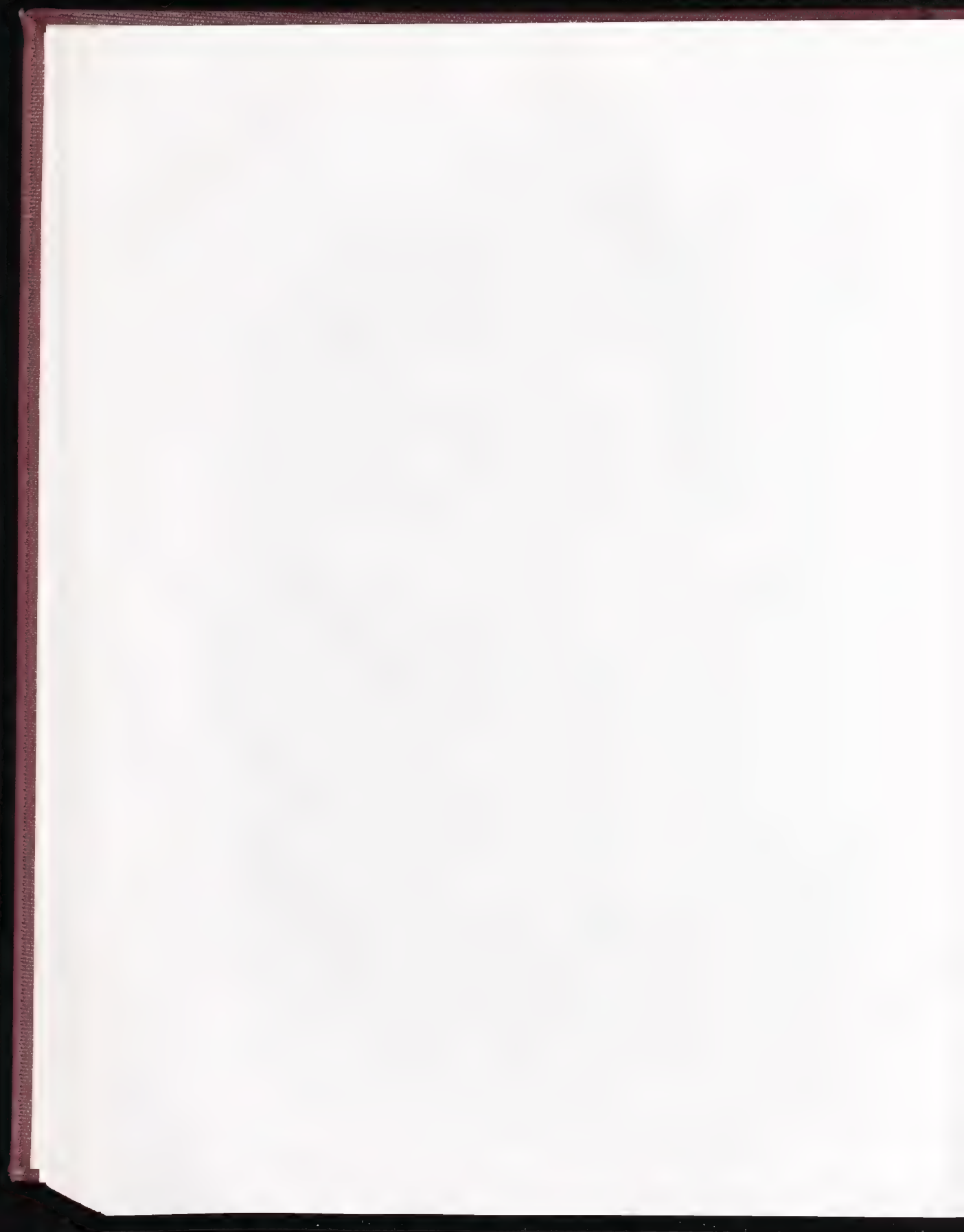
Mexican border and produce something.

SMITH: Of course if you're a painting student, presumably you could find work in the Metropolitan [Museum of Art] or the National Gallery [of Art].

COOLIDGE: Sure. There's a batch of the stuff in this country.

SMITH: But architecture is-- What about the question of archival research on dissertations? To what degree did lack of access to documents in Italy pose a problem for you?

COOLIDGE: Well, of course, the war ended and the question was what to do with the dissertation. Should I write a book? Should I take these things--some of which had been published, but two major portions had not been published--and work it up as a book? And that with full confidence that I would do what was necessary in Europe. I don't think I ever thought of doing Vignola as a book. I think to pull the group of studies together as a book would have been my notion. I'm not quite sure of that. There really the only hurdle was the Church of the Gesù. Because one could work on Vignola as a writer just as well in this country, and the other things were already in print and hadn't been torn apart, so that it was a question of working on the Gesù. Of course, what I had in the dissertation was a kind of summary article on



Vignola's development as an architect, and that would have involved going to Europe. But as I remember it, the Gesù, the archival material on that, had not been studied.

One summer I made preparations to do that work, but I deferred it a bit in Rome. And by the time I took my letter to the great Jesuit historian Father [Pietro] Tacchi Venturi, it was August, and I was astonished to learn that the Jesuits take the month of August off and literally the Jesuit world is closed down. I presented the letter at the gate. There was some whispering, and eventually Father du Roché turned up and told me this. He said, "Would you like to look around here and see the Jesuit quarters?" I said, "Sure, but aren't I taking your time?" "Oh," he said, "I hate the country. You're preventing me doing my work here, which would be sinful, so keep me from sin by letting me show you around the Jesuit headquarters." In any case, that ended my doing research work there, and of course a year or so later I was involved in the Fogg and that problem solved itself.

SMITH: Actually, we haven't really discussed Walter Friedlaender much as a teacher, as a personality.

COOLIDGE: I was thinking about that. *[But first, a

* Dr. Coolidge added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.



general remark. I sense that people try to oversimplify my education. Almost always I was working with a couple of people: Kenneth Conant, formally at Harvard. Russell Hitchcock, who effectively guided my undergraduate thesis, my approach to contemporary architecture, and much of my thinking thereafter. Richard Krautheimer was the architectural historian at NYU and was formally responsible for my thesis. He is reported to have said, "John's was the first Ph.D. I directed," or approximately that. True--at least perhaps. But I was profoundly influenced by Karl Lehmann, from whom I developed a concern to relate architecture to its immediate society, or rather to concern myself with buildings that played a conspicuous and distinctive role in their societies. I was close to Richard Krautheimer--still am. But Walter Friedlaender was the authority on mannerism at NYU, if not in the world. It was a paper for his course on sixteenth-century Roman painting that involved me with the Villa Giulia and hence led to my thesis. I became so interested in seeing how Vignola related to his time that I wrote an article about his character and achievement published in the SAH (Society of Architectural Historians) Journal. In my thesis I was as anxious to win the approval of Walter Friedlaender as that of anyone else--though of course, my immediate reference was always

to Richard.]

Friedlaender is perfectly describable but not conveyable, if I can put it that way. A biggish, sloppy man, way overweight, casually dressed to the point of-- The fact that one wonders if he always remembered to zipper up his pants. I can't remember him when he hadn't done it, but it was the sort of thing that he might be credited with forgetting. Lived, and was living, a wholly unconventional way of life, but was such a warm and, not only uninjuring person, but such a warm and inspiring person that no one cared about conventionalities when it came to him. He gave the aura of infinite patience. You had the feeling that you could ask him to advise you or read something you'd written and he would. He'd give you good advice, but you really couldn't tell whether he would do it that afternoon or whether he would do it six months from now, because you had no sense that he was really in control of his life. But in fact a wonderful teacher, because he dealt with the greatest works of art, and in addition to that, the most problematic works of art, great or not, the works of art that were the toughest to unravel. He treated them as if they were very, very old friends and they would help him.

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COOLIDGE: The greatest visual sensitivity and complete intellectual courage. He would confront a strange idea and think about it. He was open to everything. I can remember his lectures. He lectured slowly, he lectured hesitantly. He didn't mind being interrupted. In fact sometimes was, because he seemed, as it were, to mumble in several languages. Not whisper mumbling, but mumble so that you couldn't distinguish. You heard the words, but you couldn't get the distinction always. And he would clarify what he was saying. The material he was dealing with was so fresh to me, and yet always so familiar to him, that it was as if he was introducing you to a very old friend, however odd that friend would be. He was taking you completely in his confidence and would, if relevant, tell you anything scandalous about that old friend, because he would trust you, as an old friend, not to mishandle your knowledge. This would even let out skepticism about the genuineness of a work of art, whether whole sections of it were repainted. But it wasn't that he was a man of no convictions. He had plenty of convictions, but he had no fixed positions. This was extraordinary. So that in some funny way the

process of working with him was you pushing him around and reaching the solution jointly. This would mean you would be sitting by the portrait by Titian which was hanging in the Metropolitan Museum, and you could argue about it gently. Sometimes he could say, [with German accent] "Oh, no, no. That is quite impossible." But most of the time not, and it was a kind of gentle erosion. There was no apparent method. You left, thought back on the whole thing, and said to yourself, "Would to God I ever had that sensitivity and discrimination." These qualities he projected almost as if they were as independent of any disciplined effort on his part as the color of his hair was independent of disciplined effort. It was just there, and he believed in your capacity to do good work. He was there to help you along, but absolutely no sense that he considered himself a great man or a person who had accomplished very much. There was a complete absence of the Protestant work ethic. The whole idea of "Have I accomplished anything" simply would appear never to have crossed his mind. This was a great teacher, because it was all spurring you on, rather than in any sense presenting his achievements.

SMITH: So when you say that he had no apparent method, this perhaps contrasted with Panofsky, who had a very

clear methodological approach?

COOLIDGE: Well, it's simpler than that. You knew that Panofsky's lecture was organized in his mind just the way an article would be. You'd start a class with Friedlaender not at all confident that he'd remember what course he was teaching. He would be perfectly confident in saying, [with German accent] "We studied this. We learned it last time, this painting. Did we not?" And there you were. Maybe the answer was, "No, we finished that painting." We'd go on and were given the title of the next one. That didn't bother him at all. He thought about these things deeply. When the time came to go into his lecture, he had the slides and an assistant who brought the slides out. He'd spend an hour arranging them in some kind of order and then would go in and have a friendly monologue about them.

I wrote the Villa Giulia for him, and that went okay. I have a feeling that he gave it to somebody like Richard Krautheimer to read. If he made any comments--and he was perfectly capable of saying that it is good or making no comments on it--they may have been passed on from somebody else having done it. He had an office on the top floor next to Walter Cook's office. I suppose it was the place-- Of course, since the years I'd been there, it [the Institute of Fine Arts] had been greatly

improved. It had been moved around a bit. They had a whole house by the time I graduated, not a grand house, but a very good house, a patrician house.

It happened that there was a boy named [Edmund] Chapman, who was a serious student but not very close to any members of the faculty that were apparent. Hard-driving, disciplined person, and obviously I would have said no spark of originality--here I'm being perhaps prejudiced--and he was about my size. In the middle of the war, I found myself in New York with time on my hands, and I stopped by the Institute. My family were in Washington, of course, and there was nobody there except Walter Friedlaender on the top floor. I went to see him, and he greeted me nicely and politely, "Very nice to see you, Mr. Chapman." We sat down and had a fine, long, relaxed conversation, as pleasant as could be. I thought he knew who I was, but when it came time to say good-bye, I turned to him and I said, "It's always such a pleasure to see you, Dr. Cook." [laughter] He looked at me and he said, "Impudent boy!" Well, you know, you could be an impudent boy to him. He would, after five minutes of conversation, realize who the individual was. He might get mixed up on names, but he knew the individual. At the end he knew damn well I wasn't Mr. Chapman. It was this kind of relaxed atmosphere, with the highest

standards.

He must have been well in his sixties when he came here. He was not apparently an adaptable person. One had the feeling that all countries adapted to him, that he didn't demand a great deal, and the Italians found a way of accommodating him, as the Americans had. But when one realized that at sixty odd, with a scholar's reading knowledge of English, but with only the vaguest idea of how to pronounce it, he had become a very successful teacher, enormously admired, everybody taking a course with him and some of the best students being very much his students-- This was, on reflection, extraordinary.

Cook, a brisk, businesslike man without an idea in his head, a perfectly conventional man to me, but the informing spirit of the place, had the idea-- He had inherited the institution, which was going on already. His immediate predecessor, surprisingly, had been Fiske Kimball--couldn't have been more different. But Walter Cook was interested in Spanish art, had done some years of art. He was the second Harvard Ph.D. in fine arts. But not an idea in his head about the history of art. He was a good administrator, and he knew full well what he had assembled. But as for art, this was something that he knew dates and figures. All of us knew that were it not for Walter Cook, this institution wouldn't have



existed. So all of us quietly formed a tradition that you had to take one course with Walter Cook. You wouldn't in your right mind have wanted to, but it all depended on him, and you owed it to his vanity that you took a course with him.

Well, I signed up for my course, and he was assigned, or chose, the topic for my class report, this in the fall of the year. And what shall we say, the first of November, Walter Cook was hit by a truck on Madison Avenue. I don't think he was badly injured, but he was certainly injured, and his course was canceled. He presumably could do some work. The administration had to be done; the teaching could wait. But this was my last year of taking courses, and the second semester there were some courses I very much wanted to take, and what to do.

Again, this will give you perhaps some idea of the place. There were serious students, and serious students in the sense that my generation would be-- Most of the ones who were serious students were more or less my age, were in various stages. I was finishing my course work but hadn't begun on a thesis. There were students who were finishing their thesis who would be five years older than I, that sort of thing, just as Jim [James S.] Ackerman was five years younger than I, and we overlapped



by a year or so. So I went to Millard Meiss, who I knew only by reputation was a serious student. He was in the Renaissance. He became an exceptionally good friend later in life. I put it up to him. I said, "Look, this is going to be my last semester of taking courses. I made in all good faith the effort to take the course with Walter Cook. Do I have to give up one of my courses that I really want to take the second semester in order to take this?" He said no, it would be understood. Having made the effort, it would not be held against me.

Well, what this proves is that the serious students were self-conscious as a body. They knew of each other if they didn't know each other. When I needed advice which none of the faculty could give me-- I mean, the faculty would have to pretend loyalty to Walter Cook, and, you know, you couldn't very well go to the professor whose course you would have to pick between the three that you wanted. So you knew you could get a student who had been there for five years longer than you had and get advice about the mood of the place and of the profession. Because you were all in deep in it. And you were all relatively old as graduate students, and so you'd been to meetings of the College Art Association. The profession was minimally acquainted with you.

SMITH: I was wondering about Panofsky. His work in the



1920s in Germany is very philosophical and influenced by [Ernst] Cassirer. Then in the thirties and forties, his work is much more concrete. I don't know if "empirical" is the right word, but more object focused. Did you discuss in class the philosophical tradition that he had belonged to? Did he discuss Cassirer or symbolic logic ever?

COOLIDGE: No.

SMITH: Were you aware of that as being part of his intellectual formation?

COOLIDGE: Yes. Oh, hell, what was the--? There was a book he wrote in the twenties, and I can't remember its title. It's something like Perspectives [Die Perspektive als 'symbolische Form']. Very famous in philosophy, very difficult reading. This was very definitely discussion of the principles of history. I once, towards the end, say in a conversation with Richard [Krautheimer], said, "Oh, you know, I've been here studying X years. I've been reading German, I've gone to Germany--I still don't have a real command of the language. A thing like Perspektive--that's what it was called--gives me problems. What's the problem? Why am I having difficulty like this? Should I go live in Germany?" He said, "No, don't worry. You don't realize that Perspektive gives us problems. That's an exceptional



work." Okay, that solved that momentary crisis of self-doubt.

Astonishingly, in some other conversation, Panofsky referred-- I guess there was a reference to this. Somebody said they couldn't understand it, and he said, "Oh, yes, yes. Yes, that was the period in which I was trying to write like a stylist." I have a feeling that he changed objectives in the mid-twenties. I don't know what his objective had been, whether he wanted to be the Cassirer of the next generation or something like that. I don't think Warburg. But that he had an ambition in that direction, and that it changed to a more orthodox art historical one. My impression is, for instance, that he wasn't as deep in the sociology of art in the earlier publications as he became. So that's just the impression. I don't know Panofsky that well. But I think that's the nearest I can get.

Certainly Panofsky was, oh, the simplest, nicest man to me and kindly and infinitely friendly and always had time, all that kind of thing. He knew he was a great man, but that didn't mean he wasn't a human being. He was quite conscious of that. But I think he was self-conscious. You don't think of nice people as being particularly self-conscious. It seems to be in one's mind a conflict between being aware of one's self and



being simple and outgoing. I think that this change was the result of a shift in his ambition. I do now, but that's my impression. I couldn't really support that.

SMITH: During the time that you were at the Institute, were there divisions, or camps, either amongst the faculty or the students? Was there any kind of polarity?

COOLIDGE: Well, there was the senior crowd, who I've mentioned. Then there were people like Julius Held and Martin Weinberger, who were associate professors to the full professor status of the others, translating this into American terms--I'm not saying that they had those titles. But the Panofskys, Lehmanns, and Friedlaenders were a senior group and knew it and knew of one another as a senior group. They presented the image of a unified force. On the other hand, they did not present the image of being people who were very close to each other. I can imagine there are law firms where, as a member of the firm, you have to recognize that other people are your partners and so forth, even though they do different law and you may not find them particularly good fun to be with. Krautheimer was the junior who was part of that group emotionally, whom they pulled in. As for Julius Held and Martin Weinberger, [the senior faculty] conveyed the attitude that if they had to choose their colleagues, they would not have chosen these particular young men. I



mean, of course they were all refugees, the opening was here, and Walter Cook could fit them in at half the salary. But there was not the slightest hint of deference, as you got among the others. I mean, Panofsky saying, "If that's what you want, you go to Friedlaender," was typical of the attitude towards each other that they projected. But you were free to say to a Walter Friedlaender, "Oh, God, I've got to go to a lecture by Martin Weinberger," and he would say something like, "Poor you." [laughter] It wouldn't go further than that.

Almost all of the students were unmarried, and I suppose dating one another to a certain extent. I was out of that, because I was married. I had a bunch of my own friends in the Russell Hitchcock scene. Until Jim Ackerman appeared, I was the only architectural historian, I think. At least of the ones I can remember. Now, there was no distinction between classical archaeologists and art historians, and there were plenty of both. For instance, Lehmann obviously was, so to say, an architectural historian, worked, thought about architecture in connection with digs, things of that sort. Not being prejudiced against it, but it wasn't a natural person until Jim came along. Well, George Kubler briefly, but one didn't see much of one another because



of the factor of hard work, in the first place, and simply geographical difference in where one lived.

As I got to be senior and then had moved to Princeton, the Institute was a group of younger graduate students running the place. I was, I think, on the first editorial board of Marsyas, but also there was a president of the club. I was never that. But you became aware that the group slightly younger than you were running the place. I can't talk to that. Because our age group was never formally a group. The nearest we came would have been a very rare editorial meeting of Marsyas. It was nonpolarized, I would say, but also very disciple-ized.

SMITH: Disciple-ized?

COOLIDGE: I mean, Phyllis [Williams] Lehmann was a Lehmann pupil. I don't know what I was called, a Krautheimer pupil, as you wish. So that the students thought of each other as working primarily with this or that professor. They were all foreigners, and we were Americans. This was not in any sense of tension, but a sort of awareness that, oh, they just wouldn't understand that question, better ask each other. I mean, for one thing, they couldn't give you the faintest help on getting a summer job. [laughter] If you knew a student who had a job the preceding summer and you needed the



job, you'd go to him and find it. Walter Friedlaender or Karl Lehmann wouldn't have the faintest idea of whether it was a waste of time or paid or not. I went to Millard Meiss on that thing, because he was a senior student and would have judgment about the feelings and the mood of the place on this happening.

SMITH: I think maybe we could talk about your military service.

COOLIDGE: I was in naval communications.

SMITH: Were you drafted or did you enlist?

COOLIDGE: No, I volunteered and was in Washington, a desk job. I was in a small office staffed with people like myself and headed by a regular navy officer, who was miserable in wartime to be--he was younger than us--doing a desk job in Washington. I felt this was no way to fight a war, and I went to him and said, "Might I volunteer for the submarines?" You couldn't, at least in that office, just volunteer on your own. You had to have permission to volunteer. He gave me permission, and I went down to the necessary office and was told very quickly that I was an ensign and that I was over age for an ensign. Of course I was an ensign. If the navy took you as an officer, you started as an ensign, at least at my age as an ensign. And an ensign couldn't be any older than twenty-six, and I was twenty-eight or whatever it



was. It was less than thirty. I went back to the office and I went back to the naval officer, and he said, "How did it go?" I told that to him, and he said, "I let you volunteer for the submarines because they need men. I will not permit you to volunteer for any other branch of the service. Period." Well, there I was.

So I was there. It was in a group. I did somewhat administrative things. But there was a chance for a group from our office to go to England. I'm convinced I wasn't picked for ability, nor was I picked for specialty, because I could not type beautifully. I was one of three officers representing the office. One of the reasons I was picked was because I'd had that feeling that he shared, I'm sure, of resentment at being at a desk when other people were fighting. And then I had ten months in Bletchley, which was outside of London, which was a general communications outfit with the British navy, with people from all five services. Very much a joint affair, and in mid-winter or early winter--shall we say January-ish, may have been February, of '45--we, a group of us, were picked-- It was what was called a "joint and combined group." That meant all three British services and both American services, but the two fighting nations becoming one. You were a single fighting unit that joined and combined men representative of all five



services.

We went over to Germany--a boat, a train. Because it must have been a little later than this, more like April. Germany was collapsing, and we were overrunning Germany. There was the feeling that in the process of overrunning Germany, if you were near the front lines, you could get at German communications establishments before the retreating German forces had had time to destroy things or steal things or whatever. Indeed, that is precisely what happened. As you overran a German unit, say a radio station, the first thing they knew there were Americans with guns. The next thing they knew there were officers in uniform. And they had no orders as to the attitude that they should take or what they would do there with the equipment, and so forth and so on. In fact, a great many of them were absolutely convinced that the next thing that was going to happen was that the Americans were going to fight the Russians and the Germans would be allies of the allies, and so the place was wide open to you. I know nothing about details of electrical equipment. As I say, I tended to be in the administrative end of things.

SMITH: You were never asked to serve with the monuments division?

COOLIDGE: No. And therefore the people there would



simply ask a German artisan to explain his equipment. A month and a few days later, it was over, and I came back to Britain. A month or so after that, I came back to Washington.

SMITH: Now, while in Britain, you were mentioning that you met [Nikolaus] Pevsner. You also said at lunch you had met [Rudolf] Wittkower in Britain.

COOLIDGE: Yes. You had two nights and the end of the intervening day off a week, and everybody went to London. There was nothing to stick around Bletchley for. So I looked up art historians. I mean, the British were by that time, in the early middle forties, very savvy about people, human beings. And I didn't have to ask, because I knew it would be encouraged for me to go and have that day an art history day. Just completely forget about the war and look up different people and so forth and so on. Oh, you had friends you could go and stay with, visit an English family, anything like that. So I simply did arty things in London. The office was a large club. You had different days off. So three of us took an apartment together, and that meant that six nights out of the seven one of us was sleeping there. It was worthwhile having a home of your own in London--save money and pleasant.

SMITH: Then when you came back to the U.S. and went back to--



COOLIDGE: I went back to naval communications, and then they released me.

SMITH: Basically, you finished up your doctoral work and you began to consider a position, and positions began to consider you. How did you wind up back at Harvard, which you had decided you were leaving permanently in 1936?

COOLIDGE: Polly and I have known a fair number of American art historians, and we both agree that the single individual--and this includes the refugees--of the greatest personal stature was Charles [Rufus] Morey at Princeton. Wonderful man. Dreadful lecturer, but a wonderful human being. Scared the pupils. Morey and his pupils had taken over the College Art Association [of America], and in the mid-thirties, the Barr generation revolted and took over the College Art Association. So the people who were ten years older than myself were running it.

The person in that group-- A guy named Rensselaer Lee. He was there in Princeton, and I got to know him pretty well. And he organized a trip for fairly senior graduate students and young instructors to go and see the Widener collection while it was still in the Widener house. This took a certain amount of doing. Rensselaer Lee was a delightful, mannerly, most humanly sensitive person, and distinguished in the sense that he was thoroughly Ivy League, had impeccable manners, but was



also just a regular guy too. The whole thing. He got a recent Princeton graduate named David [M.] Robb, who was then teaching, I guess, at Bryn Mawr [College]. He might have just made tenure or was just about to, and he was on the trip. We lunched as a group, and David Robb said something like, "Well, when the war is all over, would you have any interest in teaching at Penn [University of Pennsylvania]?" I said, "Sure." Nobody had been that specific before. [laughter] Nothing further was said.

Then in the spring of '46, or late winter, I got an offer from [University of] Michigan, and I went up there to give a lecture. Out of the woodwork and out of the blue, an offer from Penn. I preferred the Penn offer and went there, everybody cheerfully assuming I'd have my Ph.D. in '47 or something. I mean, my thesis had been accepted, all the regulations done, except we weren't then aware that it would be held up. We loved Philadelphia. The department was David Robb and myself, and we were then, at that time, attached to the architectural school. There was a dope, an elderly dope, who was dean of the architectural school. Dave didn't get on with him. He didn't like art historians, but there we were.

Then, a year later, early spring, Harvard offered me an assistant professorship. (I was an assistant professor



at Penn.) The salary was \$250 greater.

SMITH: For a month? For the year? No, for the year.

COOLIDGE: I think it was-- Penn was paying me \$4,500 and Harvard was offering me \$4,750. Dave was very ambitious, and the department, I was confident, was going places. We were very sympathetic. On the other hand, it was a terribly small-scale operation. Dave had made the slides, partly because he could charge these to the department and make a little more money that way. He never skimmed me on slides, and they had to be billed. I was hardboiled, feeling that "We're here to teach. He's got the money, and if he wants to make them himself, he's got to make them for me." But this was also very intimate and very nice. David got me into his club in Philadelphia, which was a very nice club.



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SMITH: You had been offered a position at Harvard [University] for \$250 more than you were making at the University of Pennsylvania.

COOLIDGE: Yes. It was clear that the older generation at Harvard either had retired or soon would retire. There were three people who were ten years older than I at Harvard. Two of them had tenure; the third, Charles Kuhn, didn't. Well, let me be frank. They [the seniors] didn't seem like strong figures. Clearly Harvard was going to change. The university was committed to far greater concern with the history of art. It was remotely conceivable that a professor and a brand-new assistant professor attached to the architectural school in Penn might get switched to the faculty of arts and sciences, might get a second professor, but that was going to be a small, and is a smallish, department. Whereas at Harvard it was, and would remain, big.

SMITH: Where did the offer from Harvard originate? Was it from within the department, the school, or the president's office?

COOLIDGE: It was certainly from the department. Yes, the department then, as now, can offer anybody assistant



professorships as long as there is a spot on the budget. You then did not have the caveat that you must tell a man if there is a chance of a tenured appointment. You always have more assistant professorships than there are tenured appointments coming up. People coming from other institutions did not understand that Harvard had a strictly limited structure of tenured appointments. So that one could be the most brilliant young man in the world, but if there wasn't a tenured appointment available after your five years or whatever, you would just get a good job elsewhere, and this had to be made clear. On the other hand, as I said, the number of people somewhat older than we, of middle-aged or young middle-aged appointments, was so slight that there obviously would be a tenured appointment, and there was no question of mentioning that.

The Harvard system then was that you could have three years full-time teaching as an instructor and five years as an assistant. The assistant professor appointment was for five years, but you could under no circumstances stay for more than eight years at Harvard without tenure. [James B.] Conant drastically changed the rules of the faculty of arts and sciences in this way. Publish or perish was part of it. I was too senior and had had one year as an assistant professor and



certainly wouldn't have come to Harvard as an instructor. I came as an assistant professor. There was one other assistant professor there, a Harvard type.

SMITH: So you had no guarantees that you would get tenure.

COOLIDGE: I had no guarantee. Tenure would obviously be available, and the chances of getting it were good. I mean, in a case like that, if there had been two fabulous assistant professors and the likelihood of a second tenure coming up, they would have made an exception and promoted them both. That had happened in the past. But it only happened at a time when the dean's budget was not permanently committed to a given department to a degree that he didn't want-- It's his way of controlling the makeup of the faculty. The thing that we were aware of was that every able young man was going into anthropology, and Harvard simply didn't want to develop the anthropology department as far as it would have developed had they considered only promoting young thirty-year-old professors. So they have this scheme. I think the dean would have had to go under the corporation to enlarge the anthropology department over the setup that had been made, that Conant had introduced.

Well, I went to Harvard simply because it had the future. Only two other places compared. One was



Princeton [University], and the other was the Institute [of Fine Arts, New York University]. The Institute had no American-- I think I can say that flatly. They may have had a junior appointment, an American, but they didn't have an American who was a candidate for tenure, with the exception of Walter Cook, who was, well, I don't know, perhaps sixty, and he would retire certainly soon. They wouldn't bring in a young American to replace him when he retired; they'd look around for somebody who was senior enough to take over the job rather than develop a junior for it. Princeton simply didn't have as much to offer as Harvard did. For one thing, the Princeton museum could not remotely be compared.

The museum situation at Princeton could not remotely be compared because one was aware that Harvard had the Peabody Museum [of Archaeology and Ethnology], which is a major art museum in its own terms. You can describe it as an anthropological museum, which is perfectly accurate, but you could also call it an art museum of primitive art, and that would be accurate. The Fogg [Art Museum] had a gallery that was devoted to primitive art that had been loaned from the Peabody Museum. So that if you were interested in bringing primitive art into Western art, or into high art, into non-primitive art, seeing the thing as a whole, Harvard had amply the



facility to do that, which Princeton simply didn't.

Harvard had two refugees already, [Wilhelm] Koehler and [Jakob] Rosenberg. Both more distinguished than [Kurt] Weitzmann. Not more distinguished perhaps, but Weitzmann was a narrow specialist. He had come into Princeton, which because of [Charles Rufus] Morey was deep in illuminated manuscripts, and he enlarged this aspect. But Morey was approaching retirement. Everyone that Morey had trained in illuminated manuscripts, like Donald Egbert, had promptly switched to something else, and Weitzmann was just not a very interesting person.

The strength of the Princeton department was its kinship with the New Humanism, which was strong at Princeton. Rens [Rensselaer] Lee was at the Institute [for Advanced Study], but as a Princeton graduate, he had started out in English. There was that feeling about Princeton. But it was nowhere in terms of interest in style and in terms of what seemed like the modern tendency in art history, or any modern tendency in art history as a whole. Well, Harvard was in an old-fashioned art history tradition. Princeton was in a waning humanistic tradition. It was not for the likes of me, who was not into that kind of humanism.

SMITH: When you went to Harvard, were you hired as an architectural historian?



COOLIDGE: I was hired as an architectural historian, and I was one of two assistant professors. I was entirely an architectural historian. I can remember teaching a seminar in German baroque architecture, which had begun to interest me and there was nobody teaching it. I don't think it was being taught in America, but [Henry-]Russell Hitchcock had been interested in it, though not to the point of teaching it. It was a phase of architecture that interested him, and I caught that very much. And of course, it interested [Siegfried] Giedion. It was in a certain sense the jumping-off place for Giedion. So that was the first seminar I gave.

I probably gave a lecture course on Italian Renaissance art. Italian Renaissance architecture was very much the province of Leonard Opdycke. Since he taught only architectural history, and only French, English, and Italian Renaissance and baroque architecture, a new assistant professor coming in would not have been allowed to encroach on him. He was the nicest human being, but not the kind of professor who would have said, "Oh, I've been longing to teach a course in Renaissance painting. Why don't you let him teach the course I've been teaching on Renaissance architecture." That wasn't the way that mind worked, though the human being was as friendly as, you know, that type could have



been.

The only thing that was different-- And this played into Harvard. The advanced course I gave on Italian Renaissance architecture was a lecture course. I put on an exhibition of prints and illustrated books. The Fogg had some architectural drawings, Renaissance drawings, that were beamed at my course. The students were expected to see it and to have read any reading. I put out a small catalog of this, and that of course they read. I don't remember the specifics at all, but it's likely that one put an early edition of Vignola, certainly of Palladio, on exhibition. [Students] would have been required to have read Palladio and to have looked at Vignola, which has no text. It's the figures that explain how you get the measurements that he orders correct. [Students] could grasp the thoroughly handbook aspect of Vignola as compared to the gentleman's guide to architecture of Palladio. That you could bring out.

SMITH: In the course on Italian Renaissance architecture, how many buildings would you concentrate on? How many monuments I suppose is a better--

COOLIDGE: Likely plus or minus 100, 90 to 110 I would say. Three buildings-- No more than three buildings, not much more. It might get up to five on an occasional lecture. On the other hand, Saint Peter's could get a



lecture all its own. So three average buildings a lecture. In contrast to Leonard Opdycke. He got in every building. I got in every aspect of the relatively small number of buildings. Plans, cross sections, and so forth. The backup for all courses was photographs, and you learned the slides from the photographs. At this point, one was dealing with 3 1/4" x 4" slides, not the 2" x 2", and therefore it was practically impossible for the students to review the slides. They would cost \$4 apiece.

SMITH: These were the old glass slides.

COOLIDGE: The old glass slides. It was easy enough for Leonard Opdycke. You would have a plan of Versailles and one facade, or perhaps two; you could easily get photographs of these. When it came to a cross section of Versailles, you might not have it. It took some looking for a professor to find it. Or a plan of the chapel as a unit. I made the effort to have the ten, twenty slides that I would devote to a single monument available in photographs. Again, you probably don't need a separate plan of the chapel, but it's useful to throw it on the board and discuss it that way. So it wasn't literally every slide. I used a lot of slides. I have used as many as ninety in a single lecture, but it certainly would be a very exceptional occasion.



SMITH: Would you do paired slides?

COOLIDGE: Always paired. Sixty, seventy, I'd say, was the kind of standard that I was using. And some of these, of course, were the Roman monuments that he [the architect] must have seen. That builds up the slides here, and you might or might not expect your students to be responsible for this. It was perfectly evident what they were responsible visually for. This was my method of lecturing. I never gave enough attention to reading. I did give reading, but I can't now remember what I gave. Probably I would have given them a translation of Palladio, among other things, things of that sort, but I just don't remember. Good monographs.

SMITH: What about social context readings? Would those be on your list?

COOLIDGE: No. They would have been in my lectures. Put it this way: I think that is something that I might have come to, as I certainly thought about it a lot. But certainly at the start, they tended to take up too much time. In a course that began in 1400 and ended in 1600, the Cortegiano [by Baldassare Castiglione] was relevant only to twenty or thirty years, and this was a week's assignment in reading out of whatever number of-- I can't remember the number of weeks there are. Well, it was approximately fifteen. And so I might have given them



the Cortegiano. I certainly knew it and read it myself, and it would get into the lectures on Renaissance palaces. One of the reasons I dealt with a few buildings was that I dealt very strongly in function and patronage. This was something that was not in graduate training. Obviously the men knew it, and they would make a passing reference to absolutism or the Renaissance and the discovery of nature and man. The analogy I think of is medical school, where every doctor that's teaching anything knows that poverty and slum conditions have something to do with medicine, [laughter] but you're there to teach the people about the human body, not about what sociological situation does to the human body.

SMITH: Right.

COOLIDGE: So we were taught about style, very broadly and sophisticatedly taught about style, and it was clear that the professors knew all about literature and social history of the period, but didn't teach it. I felt that undergraduates should learn that. It is fair to say that, broadly, Lowell [Mill and Mansion: A Study of Architecture and Society in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1820-1865] is my undergraduate method. The Villa Giulia is my graduate method. The Villa Giulia is the way I would expect to teach a graduate seminar. I don't know. I can't now remember.



SMITH: We'll come back to your teaching, but were your students primarily art history majors?

COOLIDGE: Some of our students, of course, wholly so, and wholly graduate students. Undergraduates, yes, primarily so, certainly not wholly so. At least half would be, and the others might vary between history students or literature students and students from the school of design. You wouldn't likely have [architectural students], because they had a compulsory architectural history thing. They were apt to take [Kenneth J.] Conant's general course. If they missed Renaissance and Conant was lecturing on modern that year, they might come in and take my course. You have thirty students; three to five might come from the school of design.

SMITH: You had mentioned yesterday the importance of periodical literature as opposed to books. Were your reading assignments directing students to ongoing discussions in the periodical literature?

COOLIDGE: Not for undergraduates. Certainly for graduate students, but there, of course, you would be expecting a paper from them, which would be dependent on the periodicals.

SMITH: So in your undergraduate classes you didn't expect a paper?



COOLIDGE: I probably didn't do it my first year. The Harvard practice was a midterm. You always had a midterm exam. There was no regulation. There was a minimum regulation, but there was very strong local practice. The person coming in would be aware of it, and he would conform with this until he knew that it didn't suit his style. But have a midterm and a paper for undergraduates, not required, but there was an option to have a paper for the second half of the exam. If you didn't have a paper, then you had much more reading and you had much more searching questions on the reading on the final examination. I can't remember whether I required a paper or not.

SMITH: Let's move on to your appointment as director of the Fogg Art Museum. That came about relatively quickly after you joined the Harvard faculty. What happened and why?

COOLIDGE: [James B.] Conant put in a rule that a professor could serve for the government for two years without losing his professorship. In principle, you couldn't have a leave of absence for more than two years. When the war came, he was considered to be the second man on the atom bomb. He was deputy administrator of that-- I can't remember the name now of the scientist who was the head man.



SMITH: You mean [J. Robert] Oppenheimer?

COOLIDGE: Was it Oppenheimer who was the chief of the Manhattan Project?

SMITH: He was at Los Alamos.

COOLIDGE: He was at Los Alamos, but there was the Manhattan Project. There was, of course, a lieutenant general, who was there to be sure that nobody in the army got in the way. You know, if they needed some equipment and the company concerned was making guns, he was there to tell them to stop making guns and produce atom bombs. Then there was a senior scientist who was in charge of the whole thing scientifically [Vannevar Bush], and Conant was his deputy. I guess he was from time to time in Los Alamos, but he wasn't confined to Los Alamos.

SMITH: We're talking about James Conant.

COOLIDGE: Yes, James Conant. An exception may have been made for him on the two-year deal, but the presidency devolved upon the dean of the faculty of arts and sciences, who was such an effective person that he became president of Harvard. Supposing somebody left an endowment involved in the relation of business and medicine, the corporation and the president would decide that-- He represents Harvard's long-term view on this kind of thing. "No, we do not accept. If we accept this, we will have to dilute both our teaching of



business and teaching of medicine. Therefore, we won't accept it." Or the reverse, that this will help the specialty. For that, you want somebody who isn't the dean of the medical school or the dean of the business school. The dean of the faculty of arts and sciences replaced the president on those areas that affected the university as a whole, particularly the question of how wartime affected the university. He would advise the corporation. After all, seven of them, very strong trustees, could go to the medical school and say, "Look, you've got to give more attention to training people for war than you've been doing." They wouldn't think of doing that without getting the opinion of somebody who was not directly involved. So Paul [H.] Buck, who was dean of the faculty of arts and sciences, became effective president. He and the treasurer ran Harvard during the war.

Conant would come up, but I think Conant was intellectually out of it, and they avoided ever disturbing him on matters of policy. I suppose a thing that would clearly last for years, I think they might-- A difficult and specific problem, they might consult with him. Well, in a certain sense that meant that he was less of a dean, because he was doing more of this university running. A wonderful administrator, but they



had this rule that administrators had to retire at sixty-five. Edward [Waldo] Forbes was sixty-five and would therefore have to retire, I think, strictly in '45.

SMITH: I think '44 was when he retired.

COOLIDGE: Was it? That makes things simpler. Then clearly, virtually everybody that you would consider was in uniform or was working for the war. They appointed Arthur Pope to replace Forbes and [Paul J.] Sachs. Arthur Pope was conceivably a sixty-five-year-old, and they said, "You will be the exception, because you are not the regular director." Retiring at sixty-five was a way of getting rid of deans who had been there a long time. You could make an exception for somebody who was in fact an acting dean, though he happened to have the title of full dean. The net result of this was that Paul Buck was the person who was hunting for the successor for the Fogg. The Fogg curators were professors. This varied. You had a person who was primarily a curator. He gave one course and had what was called in the military "assimilated rank" as a professor.

SMITH: But I noticed most of the curators had the title of lecturer or instructor, rather than professor, in the thirties and forties.

COOLIDGE: There was a distinction there, but people like-- Jakob Rosenberg was fully a professor. A person



like Langdon Warner, who'd done no research, was a lecturer or something of that sort. It was not only that the potential directors were in uniform, the normal advisers were in uniform. You couldn't get a representative group of people to advise you. So Paul Buck hunted himself and found there were clearly two people that were to be considered. One, Alfred Barr, was not considered, because he was clearly no administrator. What most people forget, he was no longer director. He was fired as director from the Museum of Modern Art in the thirties and was there as director of collections. He had the fancy title, but he was not director. In any case, to a person like Paul Buck, he was clearly no administrator. The person that was clearly the person for the job was Daniel [C.] Rich, who was director of the Art Institute of Chicago. Now, how he knew Daniel Rich conceivably had a medical disability and was not in uniform, I don't know. I simply don't know what Dan Rich did during the war. I don't know when this took place, but I imagine it took place in the summer of '46. In '47, you were fully postwar. It didn't mean you had a great number of GI benefit students. The student body was not fully postwar, but the academic ability was fully postwar. The visiting committee, which was very strong and always has been very strong, because the Fogg, like



all institutions at Harvard, has to raise its own money. The visiting committee was like a junior board of trustees, and they were very interested in a new appointment here. It had been two or three years since Forbes and Sachs had retired, and that was long enough for Harvard to have made up its mind, have whom they want. And Dan Rich refused. They were then left, I think, with nobody, and Paul Buck said he wasn't very enthusiastic about going and starting again from scratch, [laughter] looking all over the country.

For reasons I don't know-- I guess I'd impressed my colleagues in the department in my first semester, or the record impressed them. The record was shocking to me. I was a graduate student still. I technically didn't have my Ph.D. I would get it in January '48 or something, but I'd never had a secretary and I'd never been in charge of anything as an administrator. It wasn't as if I'd run a ship during the war. I was in an office job, and sure there were secretaries in the office, but I was a junior officer and would have to wait my turn insofar as I had anybody. I was certainly not a person who could boss the secretary. There it was offered to me.

Now, the visiting committee meets traditionally once a year. This is a fairly thorough occasion, and they come up here and meet the staff, discuss things with the

staff and students. It's a day and a half, it often goes two days. There's a cocktail party for them to which virtually everybody is asked. A junior curator would be brought into that. Then dinner, in which certainly all the senior people are asked. Then a lunch the next day, which is terminal and may include people-- A local collector who has been very generous, things of that sort.

I, as a junior, would be included in these things. But I am prone to heavy colds, and I came down with a heavy cold. I also know that for me the only thing to do with a heavy cold is to go to bed. The day of the visiting committee meeting, I was in bed. At eleven I got a telephone call from Paul Buck, and he said, "Your visiting committee is down. I want you to come down and meet them." I said, "Well, yes, I'll do that." He said, "Well, how soon can you come?" I said, "I think it will be three-quarters of an hour." He said, "Well, why can't you come right away?" I said, "Paul--" Well, it wasn't Paul then. I said, "Mr. Buck, I'm down with a heavy cold. I was planning to spend the day in bed. I'm not even shaved." So, all right. He told them that he was considering somebody that he was producing in fifteen minutes, and he couldn't. In any case, I went down. It seemed odd.

SMITH: So you had no idea--

COOLIDGE: I had no idea that this was why they were here. I was fully unaware. No, it never occurred to me. No, I knew that I was seriously considered three or four days before. I didn't know that I was the leading candidate, or indeed that an offer was going to be made, until three or four days before the offer was made, until I went with Buck to see Jim Conant. I was, at that point, teaching architectural history and had no thought of the thing.

TAPE NUMBER: VII, SIDE TWO

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COOLIDGE: One of the people I'd gotten to know was Hudnut, the dean of the school of architecture, Joe [Joseph] Hudnut. Now, I told you that everybody taught. Hudnut gave a course more or less on the history of cities. This was a very successful course.

Hudnut and [Walter] Gropius had fallen out, and the students were all pro-Gropius. But Hudnut was an effective administrator, and there was no question of firing Hudnut simply because he couldn't get on with the head of the department of architecture. But it was an art school, and primarily an architectural school, and the head of architecture couldn't get on with the dean. But the dean was a city planner, which Gropius was not. I mean, Le Corbusier got into city planning, [Ludwig] Mies [van der Rohe] designed skyscrapers, but Gropius really didn't think much about it, except insofar as he went into low-cost housing. It was a fact, in a sense, that that was not expected of German architects, as when I mentioned to you that Frankfurt housing development that had no planning component other than the residential arrangement of the buildings.

Well, I was enormously flattered when Hudnut said to



me, "Wouldn't you join me in teaching my cities course next year? This will be your course as much as mine. It's not to become an assistant. I want you to join me in my course." Of course, I accepted. Now, I don't remember when that happened, but I doubt if it happened much before March, because it took a while for Hudnut to get to know me. But it did happen and I know it happened, because when I accepted the direction [of the Fogg Art Museum], I knew I couldn't undertake a new course, brand-new course, totally different subject. So I had reluctantly to go to Hudnut and say, "No, I can't. I agreed to do this. This was before my appointment had been announced."

Well, that took place Aprilish. It was spring. This was when it was public. The only thing that I can remember about my attitude was, "Well, hell, I've never done anything like this, but if they believe I can, let's find out." The year previously I had been to several places. I didn't say, but before this business of-- Indiana, they gave me an offer after the war.

SMITH: Indiana University?

COOLIDGE: I told you about the business of the president, whose name I've forgotten, that remarkable president who created the University of Indiana [Herman B. Wells], which existed, but nobody had heard of it. He



wanted it to be as good as [University of] Wisconsin. He got it somewhere near that. He came to Princeton and, yes, made me an offer in Princeton, because he was going to start a graduate department there. They had nobody, so I would be one of the founding professors. He talked to me on a weekend day. I'm putting it this way-- You'll see the reason why. Because it's a day of the week I have forgotten. I was to see him a second time on Monday and express my reactions to his talk. I don't think it was a flat acceptance, but would I be interested or not? My reaction was, "Gee, I'll have to think this over." I may have also been invited to go out there. But in any case, the offer came in Princeton. When the Monday came, I said, "I accept. I'd like to come. I'd love to come, but in view of what happened yesterday, I think both you and I--certainly I, and I'm almost certain you--would want to reconsider the offer. We can't tell now about things, but I would not want to feel fully committed myself, and I would certainly not consider you fully committed." Because what had happened in the intervention was Pearl Harbor.

Actually, a man who might well have gone with me, because I think I was by a month or so senior to him, was medically unavailable to go to war. He founded the department--Henry Hope. Henry and I talked about this at



the time, because again, even after Pearl Harbor, there were a good many months before one knew whether the likes of me, who was approaching thirty, twenty-eight or something, would be called in and that sort of thing. So I knew about Henry and he knew about me, and we talked about what he was certainly going to do and a remote possibility I would join him in doing. That came through in '46, and also I went to lecture and had an offer from [University of] Michigan.

I accepted the one at Penn instead. The one amusing thing being that-- We came up to Philadelphia, essentially to look over the situation. I knew I probably had accepted before, but, you know, really to see and to talk to people about the possibilities of where one would live. We didn't know Philadelphia. But I had known slightly Fiske Kimball, so we went to tea with Fiske Kimball. I had told Fiske that I had the offer from Michigan. Now, it happens that his career started in Michigan. Fiske talked to me as a dyed-in-the-wool eastern seaboard person. What a fine place, what a splendid place, Michigan should be, and for God's sake-- "Oh, no, that's a first-rate place. I congratulate you. By all means go if you're still thinking." I allowed as I was still thinking. [laughter] Polly sat next to Marie [Kimball] and told

Marie that we had really come there because we had the offer. I hadn't accepted, but we had the offer from Penn. We went back to Washington, and the first thing I got was a letter from Fiske saying, "I had no idea you were looking because of the offer from Penn. Of course take Penn. Don't consider Michigan." His wife had spilled the beans.

In accepting the Fogg, the directorship, I felt confident I could get an assistant professorship somewhere else if accepting the Fogg and then having it a failure meant that Harvard would have gotten somebody to replace me in the department and maybe there wouldn't have been a spot. I didn't feel it was a make or break. I hadn't wanted to come to Harvard. We both adored Philadelphia. We came here with the gravest regret, and the stuffiness of the department was very present in our minds when we came here. It was the chance of a future there. It was nothing about the present.

SMITH: Maybe you could give me your assessment of the Fogg's programs and your initial plans for changing the Fogg, in terms of the thought processes you went through in '48, '49, what you saw as the possibilities for what you could or could not do.

COOLIDGE: The Fogg was broke, and it was seriously broke. When they retired, Forbes and Sachs-- Because

Arthur Pope, who taught painting and was a painter, said to the university, "Sure, I'll run the Fogg, but I'm not going to attempt to balance the budget." Forbes and Sachs agreed that they would raise the money that they had been raising for Pope until the new director came. They had three years of this, and for two years of that, the Fogg ran in the red. The third year, they went around to everybody and said, "Look, we are out now. This is the last time we will come to you to raise money for the Fogg, and as a sort of personal gift to us, won't you give more." They raised \$50,000 in the black. It was perfectly clear to me that that I couldn't raise. Maybe I could do what they had done the two previous years, but I'd never had any experience, never had the occasion to raise money. So that the first thing was, "How are you going to meet this one?"

I'd never had any concern, particularly, with the museums. I was an architectural historian and I was excessively that, so I'd been to the museums, of course, but it never occurred to me to think about how a museum was run. I would have said, initially, I didn't have any ideas. What I had enormous ideas about was the department.

I took certain closely associated institutions like the Houghton Library, with Philip Hofer, who actually had



taught three courses in fine arts but would have a quasi-professional opinion about the Fogg-- I got to a batch of about seventeen people. I may have taken the art librarian into it. There was nobody--except the three refugees, Wilhelm Koehler, Jakob Rosenberg, and George Hanfmann--in that group of seventeen who had not had part of their training at Harvard. There was nobody who was an outsider. Within the department and the museum, excluding the refugees, Philip Hofer, and the librarian, I was the only person who had ever been employed anywhere except Harvard. My job at Penn was the only personal experience working anywhere, excepting one person had once taught summer school somewhere else. [laughter]

I moved into the thing thinking, as a member of the department--because I was a professor--how's the museum going to serve the department, but what have we got to do about the department? It was perfectly obvious, or shortly became obvious, that the other assistant professor, who worked with Arthur Pope in the Harvard program that taught the creation of painting on a theoretical basis-- I mean, all based on his color wheel. Pope's book gives you indications of that. After he [Pope] quit, this kind of teaching was going to be dropped. The other Harvard assistant professor [James Carpenter] was not going to make it. The Fogg, the whole



department needed changing. The three people ten years older than I, one [Frederick Deknatel] was editor and another [Charles Kuhn] was book review editor of the College Art Association's Art Bulletin. That had high scholarly standing. They were not as yet productive scholars. Charles Kuhn did more, and the third one, Ben [Benjamin] Rowland, who was a very impressive and productive scholar, was completely ivory tower as concerned with education. He was a painter. He was quite a broad person, but he couldn't care less as to who the next assistant professor would be or whether the general examination for the doctorate should be changed. None of the things other than his relations with students, the students and his field, and his own courses mattered. A whole direction of the Fogg, of the department, was yet to be established.

It was clear that the first thing was to get in somebody whose training was from outside. When it was clear that Jim [Carpenter] wasn't going to make it-- He may have been a year ahead of me on appointment, and a [James B.] Conant thing was that you told a junior professor on a five-year appointment in the middle of his fourth year, so that he could start looking. Certainly by my second year at the Fogg, in the middle of my second year, it was pretty clear. You generally know that an



assistant professor isn't going to make it. If there's a difference of opinion, you sense the majority is going to rule on this thing, and you sense quickly, but you don't announce this in any way, you don't let the students know it. Very soon it was clear that Harvard was going to have to replace him. I'm sure this was my nomination: it was Harry Bober, who was, of course, one of the serious students [at the Institute of Fine Arts] and I think the first editor of Marsyas. Born in the Bronx and pure NYU.

They'd lost another assistant professor and a very good one. Ted Grace was killed in the war. George Hanfmann, I'd forgotten, was a young refugee there. George and I not only became really good friends, but always we had entirely identical points of view in the history of art. Not only in the sense of we got to broaden this-- I taught architecture much the way he taught architecture, same emphasis on background. Our basic point of view toward art was much the same. The two younger people, particularly when one of them was director of the Fogg, couldn't make the choice of the next assistant professor. If it was a reasonable choice, then they would defer to our conviction that it ought to be somebody who hadn't been trained at Harvard, who would bring this in. And this continued.



Harry Bober didn't work out, and then it was clear that a Harvard man should be brought because he was, obviously, the person--[Sidney J.] Freedberg--when you need somebody in Italian painting. I can't remember the relation of that to Millard Meiss's departure, but yes, I guess we knew that Millard was leaving and we needed somebody there. Sidney was clearly the best person in that, so we did that.

SMITH: I think he came in '54, as I recall.

COOLIDGE: That's right. Millard must have told us he was going by then. But, I mean, thereafter [Ernst] Kitzinger and a whole batch of people came.

SMITH: So you actively involved yourself in the recruitment of new faculty throughout?

COOLIDGE: Oh, very much so. Jakob Rosenberg was fully a professor. He involved himself. I remember he was one of a committee of three who were there my first year who revised the doctoral examination. But I was entirely a professor.

SMITH: Actually, one person who was on the faculty, who I believe was on the faculty when you were a student and became more senior when you returned, was [Frederick] Deknatel.

COOLIDGE: He's one of the three people of the [group] ten-years older than I am. I had a curious relation to



Deknatel, which had no practical significance. I took Kingsley Porter's last course in the spring, and, you know, he disappeared in Ireland.

SMITH: Presumably drowned.

COOLIDGE: Presumably drowned. His teaching assistant read the blue books and sent them to him in Ireland. And they reached Ireland after he had disappeared. So the teaching assistant's grades became the grades in the course. The teaching assistant was Fred Deknatel. I didn't know at the time that he gave me my grade, but we discovered that when we came back. Of the three I mentioned, Charles Kuhn was the second, and he was running the Busch-Reisinger [Museum], so he had been around. And Ben Rowland, the third one, had been my tutor my junior year. He was the one person on the staff who had actually taught me. Of Kuhn and Deknatel, the senior staff had a prejudice against Kuhn. Well, there's something tricky here. He was, I think, an associate professor, and he certainly should have been-- Maybe he was an assistant, but exempt from the eight-year rule, possibly that. But the senior staff would not promote him, give him tenure.

When I was offered the job, I made two conditions: When Edward Forbes took the Fogg, the university had agreed to pay for the running of the building, which cost



\$5,000 a year. They continued to pay \$5,000 well into the middle of the thirties, and I wouldn't be surprised if it wasn't more thereafter. In the mid-thirties, Forbes and Sachs, as they thought of their fund-raising, persuaded Radcliffe [College] to contribute another \$5,000. When I took the job, the university was paying \$10,000, even though we were the entire physical corpus of the art department. I mean, they paid for heating and lighting in the English department. Why shouldn't they pay for heating and lighting in the fine arts department? My first thing was, "Look, I see the financial situation, and Harvard has got to kick in more. Period." In addition to which we ran the art library. The art library was part of the museum. They did raise that to like \$20,000, which of course is nowhere near what it costs. They didn't honor this.

The second thing, as I told you, was that since the department was an oligarchy and I was a member of the department, I had to be a member of the oligarchy. Associate professors normally had tenure. I did not consider that I had tenure, but I had to be a member of the oligarchy. That was fundamental to my thinking. I would be a professor who ran the art museum. I was not the museum director. The only thing I knew professionally was enough art history to teach.



SMITH: How long did it take you to get the budget crisis under control? When did you turn things around?

COOLIDGE: I could say seventeen years, but I think that is a statement for effect. We were never really in the clear until seventeen years later, when an unrestricted endowment of \$3 million came in. I retired partly because-- And this is literally true. I didn't mention it before. I retired partly because when we were in the black, then I realized I had to be much more of a museum man than I had been. Though I went to the meetings of the small and very clubby Association of American Museum Directors, I never played any part in there, probably because I really didn't like the members of the profession as professionals. I liked many of them as individuals, but the profession, I thought had an elitist-atmosphere attitude. They were natural Republicans; I was a Roosevelt New Deal person who kept quiet because I had to raise money. But that's where all my sympathies were. Their sympathies tended to be the other kind of thing. We didn't fight about this. There were two different kinds of people here.

[Because of the endowment] my responsibilities would be not to the museum as a "laboratory for the art department," which was the traditional phrase. I darn well would have to get out and raise some funds for



acquisition and get into the purely museological side of it. I had learned to do that acceptably, but I would have to be much more involved in that, and that didn't interest me.

To get back to the original question, the first thing was to cut. Edward Forbes had gone out at a poor time and tried to get an endowment for the conservation department. The conservation department had a person who was a pure scientist who did science relevant to conservation [John Gettens]. I mean, we inherited from Grenville Winthrop a great collection of oriental bronzes. Oriental bronzes, like all bronzes, are subject to a thing called bronze disease. His end of his career was to find out as a scientist what bronze disease was and what you did about it. We knew damp had something to do with it, and you kept salt, or whatever, in the case, but nobody quite knew what bronze disease was. The Fogg department could afford him and some assistance of pure scientists there. They brought out their own magazine, own journal, and it was clear to me that we couldn't afford it. Edward Forbes had gone out to get that endowed and failed. Utterly failed.

One of the ways of getting the Fogg into the black would have been to get an endowment which would be restricted to this field, in which the Fogg was easily



the most distinguished in the country and the only part of the country that was doing any research in the field as well as training people going into it. But this was an area if you couldn't endow it, we would have to think of as a department that took care of the Fogg's collections. And so the senior staff of the conservation department left. George [Leslie] Stout, who was the head man of the conservation department, came back after the war and became director of the Worcester [Art] Museum. And Murray Pease, who was the chief conservator of paintings, had gone to be head restorer at the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art]. I had two people, again ten years older than myself, that hadn't been leaders in the museum. The two people--and this really proved to be true--they just didn't get enough done. They worked terribly hard, but the rate of accomplishment-- The bronze disease thing had been going on far too long. If you have a whole collection to take care of, you can't devote the whole scientific endeavor to bronze disease when there were other aspects of science, such as the care of paper. The only significant bronzes we had were ancient Chinese bronzes, and we had paper to cover Japanese prints and manuscripts and you name what, things like that. It would take forever to get pictures cleaned and so forth, and one knew that it could be done



more quickly. The line between conscientiousness and being scientific is fairly hard to draw, and Dick [Richard D.] Buck, the chief conservator, let considerations of science push him into overconscientiousness. At least that's what I called it. I think it was just that he was a slow worker.

I said that the curators should have the status of the faculty. That meant three months summer vacation if they wished, but it also meant that I would observe the eight-year rule. If a guy had been a conservator for eight years and I didn't want to keep him-- Well, if I then kept him on after eight years, I had, in effect, given him tenure. Now, if he ceased to be competent, you would fire him, but you couldn't say, morally, "I could get a better person." When these two people came up for tenure, I said that I thought in these terms, and I couldn't guarantee keeping them.

So they left, and I got in a younger woman, who lasted my time and who was not, I was told by people in painting, the best in terms of the skill with which you apply repaint. You clean a painting down to something, and you have something to do with the basic material, whatever it is. You don't leave the raw canvas. You've got to put something on the raw canvas there. If it's a small break, you paint it up so it matches the rest of



the drapery, or if it's in the middle of an eye, you paint in a dark retina. She didn't do that kind of thing, which, as you probably know, is never done with paint that can't be easily removed. I mean, in your and my experience--I'm talking to us both as amateurs--if it's oil paint, then the black paint of an eyeball is watercolor, because you can just wash it off ultimately. What you do actually is oil paint, but with a binder that is chemically removable. It's like water removing watercolor, so you can get a chemical thing that dissolves the binder and the paint comes off. Well, I had to get a new person there. But I'd inherited an excellent staff, so I did not have problems of staff.

The department's chief thing was to get in people from the outside. The museum's chief thing, as I saw it--Because this is a matter of position, by which I mean it's something that's professionally acceptable to disagree with, at the same time it's not unique to me. The Fogg was not modern in my terms. The first one-man exhibition of Degas anywhere apparently was given in the Fogg. I won't say that they didn't have perhaps prints that were early Picasso. But this was not modern. In my terms, "modern" meant the Museum of Modern Art, and there was nobody on the Fogg museum staff who cared about this. Fortunately, Frederick Deknatel was a collector of modern



art himself, but the Fogg had never had any exhibitions of contemporary art. This was clearly a thing that had to be done. We had to build up a collection of contemporary art, as the Busch-Reisinger had. So this whole thing. And the department in this way-- We would do well to back up Fred Deknatel with a younger person of his choice who would be teaching a different aspect of the nineteenth or twentieth centuries.

SMITH: So was Deknatel your only modern--?

COOLIDGE: Well, Charles Kuhn was modern but didn't teach it. He built up a remarkable collection of German expressionist art. He was modern in that sense and collected modern in that sense personally. Both Kuhn and Deknatel were in a position to collect, and Kuhn did collect contemporary art.

The Fogg was conceived as a teaching museum. When we come to Paul Sachs, we will talk about the museum course, but the students in his course put on an exhibition one year. What I hadn't realized was that that was practically the only exhibition they'd get in. I thought a museum should have exhibitions, so we started having exhibitions. Deknatel came to me and said, "Gee, it's nice to have exhibitions." I hadn't given that matter any thought. Teaching at a museum, what did that mean? If you didn't have exhibitions, you had your fixed



collection, and of course you had things in storage. And graduate students who were working in areas could use the things in storage, but there was no teaching of undergraduates using the museum. So one began to think in those terms, and, you know, there's a show on now called "Rembrandt and His Pupils," which is based on the collections in the Fogg, and that [is intended] to match Seymour Slive's lecture course on Rembrandt and his pupils. But that hadn't happened before. One simply started to mold the museum with undergraduate teaching of that sort.

SMITH: What about rotation of your permanent collection? Was that geared then to what the faculty was planning to teach?

COOLIDGE: Not that I was aware. On the other hand, it probably happened. It would happen in terms of a small group of objects. You know, there was an entire baroque course, and you would bring the Poussins out. But you wouldn't rehang a gallery with Italian baroque only and retire the two Poussins. Half the galleries were permanent collection--didn't change. The other half were using the permanent collection specifically for teaching.

TAPE NUMBER: VIII, SIDE ONE

APRIL 11, 1991

SMITH: I'd like you to discuss your acquisitions policy when you were director of the Fogg [Art Museum], with particular emphasis on modern art, but if there are other acquisitions that you had an active role in bringing to the Fogg, you might discuss those, particularly as the collection is supposed to be a teaching collection. How your acquisitions related to your conception of what the department should be teaching and how it should be teaching. I understand you made a decision that you were going to collect modern art for the Fogg. Is that correct?

COOLIDGE: Yes.

SMITH: Was there opposition to that decision from other faculty members? Did you have a board of advisers to the museum?

COOLIDGE: Well, it was the visiting committee that performed that function. Indeed, a prominent member of that committee was Joseph Pulitzer [Jr.], and either my first year or as near it makes no difference, he offered to pay for an exhibition of the work of living Americans and any kind of do that we could think of in association with it. Fair enough, exactly the sort of thing I like,



and it worked out. I think he may have suggested that we get three or four, and three or four it was. I don't think they all came to the opening. They may have. I can't remember that they all gave lectures. I can only remember [Robert] Motherwell lecturing there, but I'm sure I invited Jackson Pollock. I forget who else was invited. It was people of his general kind and no more than four of them, and it was no later than my second year there.

Joe Pulitzer was always interested in contemporary art, not only in his collecting himself, but in what the Fogg was doing. In the end, of course, he endowed a professorship in that field. He shortly started giving works from his own collection to the Fogg, and very splendid ones. The impression that we had was that ultimately his collection would be split half and half between Saint Louis and Cambridge, the division being made in part--well, in very considerable part--to suit the individual institutions. Thus we would get impressionists, for example, particularly those who were not already represented. He gave them his huge Matisse, because he thought it was a picture that should be on exhibition all the time. It does occupy a great deal of space, and it's better-- Of course I was disappointed not to get that, [laughter] but at the same time, sitting in



his chair, it makes sense that that should be in Saint Louis rather than in Cambridge.

It was perfectly obvious to me that the twentieth century had to be represented and fully represented. Very early on, again no later than my second year, I asked Alfred Barr who he considered the great artists of the-- Well, one could put it this way. One could say the "great living artists," and accepting that if somebody had just died, that wouldn't disqualify him. He came up with the names of four painters, which were in a sense perfectly obvious then: Picasso, Matisse, Braque, and Klee. To these I added, with complete conviction, Brancusi. One started out knowing the Fogg should have all of those five represented, in a certain sense as soon as possible.

Just as when I took over the Fogg, the impressionists and postimpressionists had been represented, so I hoped that when I ceased to be the director of the Fogg, that group of artists would be represented, and of course they are. Just as the greatest of our impressionists came from Maurice Wertheim into my regime--this had been all set up by [Edward Waldo] Forbes and [Paul J.] Sachs--so the Pulitzer collection, if it comes, will in a sense reflect my relationship with Pulitzer. Knowing what is due to come



to us, that representation, with the possible exception of Klee--we do have Klees, but I think we could do with more--has been more or less filled. We have two Brancusis, and, fortunately, one that I have every hope will come to us. That is not enough, but it's a good start. You can teach Brancusi from those three. Joe Pulitzer gave us, I think, an artist who was missing, and that was Vuillard. He also gave us splendid things of artists we already had. We had had Cézanne. He gave us a beautiful Cézanne landscape, a watercolor as I remember, which filled out the collections of people who were represented.

One of the artists who was in that first exhibition was Jackson Pollock, and all I can remember about that Jackson Pollock was that I hung it wrong. I hung it horizontal if it was meant to go vertical, or the other way around, and was advised by a marvelous man of whom more later, Eric Schroeder-- So that when the show opened, it was exposed right.

SMITH: In terms of the five artists that you talked about, one could propose another group of five artists as being significant to twentieth-century art: Marinetti, Duchamp, Ernst, Dalí, and Magritte. Did you consider the surrealist-dada tradition, or the futurists, as being something that needed to be a part of the documentation



of twentieth-century art in the Fogg?

COOLIDGE: Certainly Duchamp, though my impression, perhaps wrong, was that there were quite simply no Duchamps available. I can't remember, sitting here, ever having seen one. He at his best could be better than the other people operating every day. I would have gladly had one. One of the first things that happened to me was to hear that Walter Arensberg hadn't made up his mind what to do with his collection, and I went out and made a play for that. I didn't get it for very good reasons, but I had the impression that such a large proportion of the small volume of paintings that Duchamp had done were in the Arensberg collection. There was virtually no likelihood or possibility of our getting even a modest Duchamp.

The surrealists, well, the group that you mentioned never appealed to me personally. I mean, imagine yourself a collector. Would you own one of them? Personally not. They also did not appeal to Fred [Frederick] Deknatel--who was, after all, teaching that material--or to Charles Kuhn. In other words, those two men we've neglected. They're very important to this story--this is only one aspect of it. They weren't in the Harvard Stimmung. I don't know, I'm sure that they got into Fred's lectures on twentieth-century art, but



they just didn't appeal. They didn't seem as important to me then as they are now. I think this was a lack, and while I made every effort to buy significant works of art even if the artist in question didn't please me particularly or if I didn't think he was as important as his current status, only in the last few years have I come to feel that this was a major oversight. Only in the last few years have student reactions suggested that it was a major oversight.

An initial major-- I won't say oversight, but the effort to get that part of modern art worthily represented was so great that I was much too late on recognizing the importance of the New York painters. I was brought to that realization by a remarkable group of graduate students who-- Roz [Rosalind] Krauss and a person whose name for the moment has slipped my mind, Fried--

SMITH: Oh, Michael Fried.

COOLIDGE: Michael Fried and a girl, English girl [Barbara Rose], and Charles [W.] Millard. That group of students made me really aware of these painters, and we started collecting those very early. Indeed, I was astonished to learn from his widow that the Fogg was the first museum to buy a Morris Louis, and the result of that was that she gave the Fogg all his drawings. A



wonderful bonus for having done that. But another thing that we got started at the very end and should have thought of earlier--and with one coup--was that we should, in collaboration with Houghton [Library], have gone after the papers of artists. And we did in fact get the papers of-- Oh dear, one of the artists associated with-- A whole group of names have gone from me now. The great woman painter who lived in the West and did flowers--

SMITH: Georgia O'Keeffe.

COOLIDGE: Georgia O'Keeffe. She was married to [Alfred] Stieglitz, and the most abstract painter, American painter, in that group was--

SMITH: Well, there was Stuart Davis, Arthur Dove, Max Weber--

COOLIDGE: Well, Stuart Davis. We got the Stuart Davis papers, which then one of my assistants used as the basis of his Ph.D. thesis. There was reason to believe we might have gotten the papers of Pollock. His widow was not unsympathetic, but at this point I retired from the Fogg and the succession were not as interested as I had been. But I think there was something. Harvard could have, just as we got the papers for the Busch-Reisinger [Museum], [Walter] Gropius and-- Who's the American who worked in the Bauhaus, the one in America--?



SMITH: Lyonel Feininger?

COOLIDGE: We got the Feininger archive. So if, late though it was, I had stayed on and we had pursued this, we could have become-- Because the Houghton was willing, and nobody else-- I mean, the Museum of Modern Art didn't have the facilities for archives. We could have been an archival center. That seems to me one of the things that a college museum can do. And with students to publish them and with professionals who have extensive air-conditioned storage space and association with rare books in the library, this seemed to me an area that we could have-- Again, the sort of thing you wish you'd thought of ten years earlier. As it was, I thought of it towards the end of my regime. The Stuart Davis things were the only real coup we got along that line.

SMITH: You have a very nice room of the New York school, of [Mark] Rothko and [Franz] Kline and Motherwell, all very nice representative pieces of the major artists. When were those paintings collected, and were they collected by you?

COOLIDGE: I started on it. What I knew would happen would happen. Of course they were given to us. People ask about exhibitions, and exhibitions are a way of suggesting to private collectors that you're an institution who is interested in the works of art they

own. I think that Joe Pulitzer felt a tremendous loyalty to Harvard, but it certainly supported that loyalty to feel that the Fogg was willing, was interested in contemporary art, which he was buying all the time. One thing leads to another this way. For example, the Harvard Rothkos played a considerable, really a major, part in this. Then somebody gave us a lovely Rothko for our gallery. It was after my time, but you build up on this kind of thing.

Certainly not everything in that gallery did I buy, but I bought enough so that the others came. The people who succeeded me recognized the student interest in this kind of material, so that it wasn't put away for keeps. I think Agnes Mongan had absolutely no interest in this kind of art. Seymour [Slive] would go and look at it in an exhibition. He didn't have anything against it, but he wouldn't have pursued it. Indeed, I taught myself a little about Picasso and Braque and Matisse, but it was the desire to have the Fogg a contemporary institution, and always such, though not necessarily the institution which was discovering these people. I mean, we weren't there-- Shall we say, it's the responsibility of the Whitney [Museum of American Art] to be one of the first museums to know that-- That is if they have never been the first to give them--as against a dealer's gallery--a

show, then they missed the boat.

SMITH: Or the ICA [Institute of Contemporary Art] here in--

COOLIDGE: Or the ICA. Well, for a student who cares about these things-- And the Harvard graduate should care. You take the undergraduate body as a whole-- I was saying to myself, can you imagine West Point without being interested in contemporary weapons? Of course you can't. The Fogg should be doing this in terms of the fact that it's your graduates who are going to become collectors, who are going to be supporting the art of our own time, in whatever way. I mean, if only as museum directors, and that this ought to be a natural part of their education in college.

SMITH: Now, but it does raise the question-- I think I'm going to ask two or three--in the sense of a kind of devil's advocate--

COOLIDGE: Sure, please.

SMITH: --questions just to get your reactions.

COOLIDGE: Don't say "be a devil's advocate." I'm not afraid!

SMITH: Your collection, the Fogg collection as it stands now, ends circa 1960, so there would be the question of acquiring [Andy] Warhol or [Robert] Rauschenberg, or [Robert] Indiana, those artists who have established a



classic position in the sixties and seventies. During your tenure, did you look at people such as Warhol and Rauschenberg?

COOLIDGE: Oh, certainly.

SMITH: Did you consider acquiring their work? I think it was evident that Warhol was going to be the historically significant artist of the mid-twentieth century.

COOLIDGE: You said in the sixties and seventies. Remember, I quit in '68. Sure, I had seen them. I think I would have, at that moment, put them in. I really would have said that among the ones you mentioned, I hadn't sorted out which to go for first. I certainly had the feeling that there were a limited number of Pollocks, and of the Americans of my generation, his significance was the least debatable. This was perhaps-- If one had a prime objective, it would be that. By all means, the next group, I would have hoped to have bought those in the seventies. If I'd have been lucky, I would have bought one of them in the sixties. I didn't. But by all means, those are figures that should have been represented. They should be in the Fogg now.

I'm not a painting man. Well, if you're a professor at Harvard teaching things that are not contemporary art, and not a collector, and are not financially in a



position to collect seriously-- I could have, I'm just not temperamentally so. You can't expect to be personally in the forefront. I mean, I could not expect to be a leader among people judging American art. You are dependent, therefore, on those around you. I thought that what was ideal was for the Michael Frieds of this world to be at Harvard and to speak to me and for me to respond. But I would have expected one of them to have called my attention to Warhol, shall we say, and at least underlined my desire to get it. I feel no shame in this. I think the director of the Fogg is working with the people around him with interesting minds. If you get the right kind of graduate students, that ought to be one of the things that they are doing, which is projecting their sense of values onto an older generation. ["Three American Painters: Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, Frank Stella"]

SMITH: Did the famous show that Fried curated, lead to the Fogg acquiring [Jules] Olitski or a [Kenneth] Noland or a [Frank] Stella?

COOLIDGE: In the first place, I was very close to that. I think I'm perhaps the only person who sat down with the Fried manuscripts and made him change it. He certainly didn't write well then, and I was damned if we were going to publish something which-- Well, I won't say it had



split infinitives, but it could have been made a little clearer if you altered the place of two phrases. So that I was very much in the thick of this. He picked the artists. Noland offered us one of his works of art, and it was Fried who picked out the one. Noland was a little surprised. He hadn't meant anything quite as big as that. But we had also bought a Noland. At Fried's suggestion we bought an early Noland.

This kind of sequence of events seemed to me absolutely the kind of thing to do. I would have hoped, thinking impersonally, that when the director got to be, shall we say, sixty years old, there would be a curator, or even a professor, who was in touch with the opinions of the really young and whom the director would trust precisely because he was among the leading critics of that day. You can't always plan this for yourself, but you can plan it for the institution when you are no longer capable of it.

SMITH: For instance, in the book of modern art at the Fogg which Caroline Jones put together, which I presume is in a way a Fogg publication--

COOLIDGE: Is this Modern Art at Harvard: [The Formation of Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Collections of the Harvard University Art Museums]? Or is there another book that she's written that I don't know?



SMITH: It's the one that includes the essay that you wrote.

COOLIDGE: Yes. That's right. Modern Art at Harvard.

SMITH: Right. There is a characterization of the collection and the attitude of the Harvard faculty, in the sense of the Fogg school having such an emphasis on formalism, a teleological view of the development of modern art.

COOLIDGE: A shameful admission. What do you mean by "teleological"? I would look it up in the dictionary-- It's certainly familiar, but I've forgotten--

SMITH: A progression from A to B that is entirely predictable.

COOLIDGE: Okay. Fair enough.

SMITH: Where the conclusion is predicted by the premise and vice versa. And that these two factors led to a conception of significant modern art as being really quite limited to those works, those artists, who represented a formal advance beyond cubism and whose work had a kind of moral and constructive intellectual program. I'm just wondering how you'll respond to that kind of characterization of the Fogg and its approach to modern art.

COOLIDGE: Basically right. I find it omits a great deal of the Busch-Reisinger, and that was something that we



actively encouraged. That is a perfectly accurate description of my point of view and of Fred Deknatel's point of view, by and large of the point of view around me, excepting that Charles Kuhn, in a measure, had a different point of view.

And going to the point of saying that I would always hope that there would be one or more different points of view-- As Agnes Mongan and Phil [Philip] Hofer represented a different point of view in the admiration of Andrew Wyeth, and they put on an Andrew Wyeth show ["Andrew Wyeth: Dry Brush and Pencil Drawings"]. When that show was put on, there was a revolt, certainly among the graduate students, and among possibly the younger faculty. That this was an outrageous thing to do. Well, again, I would never collect an Andrew Wyeth. I'm very suspicious of Andrew Wyeth, but the two people concerned were professionals. The material specifically had not been shown, and they produced a professional catalog.

Whatever else you would say of Andrew Wyeth, he was by far the most popular living artist that America had ever produced. It is part of the Fogg's function to show an individual about whom such things can be said. It would have been a limitation of the Fogg if you never got around to it, as it was a limitation that we didn't get into surrealism significantly. Ideally, though you never



could achieve it, you would have at least three schools operating and having input instead of, in effect, two. Perhaps you need four. But you want to be open to that, and of course to varying degrees. I think one Wyeth show was enough, and we didn't need to go on to the other Wyeths or similar people. But we ought to have had at least one surrealist show, and ultimately, we ought to have more surrealist shows.

SMITH: It seems to me that the question of lasting significance is very tricky, because, for example, a museum like the Fogg transplanted to the 1870s might have showed Bouguereau and never showed Manet, just given the local prejudices of the art profession of that time.

COOLIDGE: That's right. But similarly, and one of the things that I came to feel-- Well, you don't move into a museum thinking all these things. That the point was simply to own a work of art of the best local painter, so we own a [György] Kepes. Now, again, I wouldn't go out to buy a Kepes, and I don't think that the Metropolitan [Museum of Art] needs to own a Kepes, just as the Boston [Museum of Fine Arts] didn't own any Prendergast. Perry [Rathbone] came along and said, "Look, he's the greatest Boston painter since Copley. We've simply got to have some Prendergast." That's absolutely right. If you get a middling successful painter in Cambridge, the Cambridge



museum ought to have an example at least of his work, whether you like his work or not. The very process goes against so much of my whole bringing up. So I'm constantly telling things that are true, but they come out as boasting, or at least they sound as boasting to me. It was my suggestion to Charles Kuhn that he attempt to collect material related to the Bauhaus, which had nothing really to do with his taste, but which was dead right. Gropius was there; we should have Gropius material. Scandalous if the Harvard museum hadn't had that. Then it built up, and it's that kind of thing that goes on. It's no criticism of Charles Kuhn that he hadn't thought of it. It's your business to do what you do well, and it's the business, perhaps, of your boss to suggest taking care of things that you don't do well.

SMITH: Are you familiar with Serge Guilbaut's book How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art?

COOLIDGE: No. Not even aware it existed. I'm aware that that thesis exists. I don't know the book.

SMITH: I wanted to get your response. I think there are two aspects to his thesis. One is that abstract expressionism gained its success because it fortuitously coincided with the needs of the Cold War state in the period of 1945 to 1955. The other is the apotheosis of American abstract expressionist painters, to the



detriment of French and other European painters who were contemporaneous. Let's take the political question first. Do you have any response to the purported relationship of the success of abstract expressionism and certain American foreign policy needs in the Cold War period? I think that is the essence of the Guilbaut thesis.

COOLIDGE: My first, and I'm sure basic, reaction is "Bullshit." My second reaction would be that of course there is--I'm trying to get a compound word--an intellectual-sociological background to the New York school. It's reflecting something more than simply the artists putting black on white, or putting black on white in the way they did in curves, because the cubists were primarily straight lines. There is a fundamental something there. The most I would grant would be that certain aspects of the Cold War policy-- Which aspects I am not prepared at the moment to define, but I'm guessing there are aspects of it which reflect a parallel point of view. I don't think it is because of Cold War needs. I think, at most, it is because, granted a certain social and economic situation, the Cold War was one way of facing that. That reflects something profound in America that they face that, for instance, rather than going Nazi, rather than assuming any theologically directed



position, and that whatever it was in the American character that produced this might also produce this painting. But the superficial idea that it had appealed to the postwar situation, which is the way you presented it--and I'm not criticizing that, but that is what I'm answering to--I think it's wrong at a profound level. But I think that there is a level at which it reflects something profound that the Cold War situation also reflects. It may be something as vague as a love of individualism.

SMITH: I think part of the historical question is why, after so much resistance, the resistance or indifference to abstraction in the visual arts, the elites in the United States suddenly begin to embrace it. That perhaps there was still resistance to abstraction amongst elites. I mean, in your position in the Fogg Museum and also at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, did you find that the constituencies for those two museums were enthusiastic about including twentieth-century art or abstract art--?

COOLIDGE: There was a significant minority who were. There was presumably a significant minority who weren't. But the significant minority who weren't were less influential on the ruling majority. They seemed the true eccentrics to the ruling majority. The ruling majority felt that "These guys are younger, but they're



fundamentally our kind of guys." The ruling minority felt that "These are more like fanatical Muslims," I mean people that are off at the edge and don't represent-- You know, the likes of me may exaggerate this thing, it may not be quite right, but you've got to give that degree of people a representation. They at least have a potential or embracing philosophy, whereas those who reject it are simply one-issue eccentrics.

SMITH: This leads into the effect of the McCarthy-type repressive thinking and the McCarthy period on museums. In a number of communities in America there were strong efforts, sometimes successful, to remove Picasso from permanent collections because Picasso was a known communist. Did you face those kinds of pressures, either at the Fogg or at the--? Of course, you didn't have Picasso at that time, but--

COOLIDGE: Oh, yes, we did.

SMITH: Or at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts?

COOLIDGE: No. Well, partly because we knew it wasn't true. I mean, very dubious to what extent you can call Picasso a communist. I know he may have had a card once, but I mean this was-- The communists didn't really with their heart and soul accept him as a communist. Boston, greater Boston--and I include Harvard in this; call it New England, I don't care--the inhabitants lack passions,



shall we say. Certainly there is part of America that passionately believes in the Bible. You'd be hard put to find an individual here-- Well, you will find individuals, but certainly no group. We're not extremists any longer, which I suspect is a weakness. This kind of thing they're just not prey to, and they never fell for McCarthyism, though there were plenty of people who believed in it, including the marvelous--and very sympathetic to me personally--superintendent of the Fogg, who thought that McCarthy was right. All right, there were more of them than I realized, but it certainly never reached to the level of the people who were making decisions. Though what's his name-- Was it Burke who was head of the John Birch Society? It wasn't Burke. There was an individual who was head of the John Birch Society-- His brother, who was fundamentally sympathetic to him, lived next door to us.



TAPE NUMBER: VIII, SIDE TWO

APRIL 11, 1991

SMITH: I wanted to talk to you about the relationship of the Fogg to the Harvard University administration, to the president's office, and how that relationship changed, if it did, with the succeeding administrations. I mean, I'm wondering what role the museum played. Or the museums--I think I have to remind myself that you were not only the director of the Fogg, you were also in charge of all the museums.

COOLIDGE: That's right. Well, not the Peabody [Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard]. I was in charge of the Semitic Museum. Did I take on from there?

SMITH: No, you didn't.

COOLIDGE: When I took over, it was in the hands of a man named [Robert H.] Pfeiffer. A terribly nice man who retired and died shortly thereafter. Polly knew his wife; we came to know his widow very well. Then I could not find anybody who would take the job. It should have gone to a professor of Hebrew, and did go to a professor of Hebrew, who wouldn't do a darn thing on the museum. So it was transferred to another professor of Hebrew, who said he wasn't interested in that kind of administration and then devoted his time to the National Society for the



Teaching of Hebrew or some administrative thing of that sort. I felt that if the people who were supposed to benefit couldn't produce anybody-- [Robert H.] Pfeiffer, in fact, was a professor at Boston University. He never made it to the Harvard faculty. I thought there was a clear solution to all this, which would have involved certain financial scrambling. We ought to give it, lock, stock, and barrel, to Brandeis [University]. They didn't have any ancient art in their collections; they wouldn't even buy it. They had good local Jewish support, and this would play a part in their university that it could never play here. At which point, I was no longer in charge of the Semitic Museum. They found a man eventually, I think after I retired. They got quite a good person, who was running it well. But I still think it would have been a more fruitful idea. Maybe it's been better off under the good person they have had since. Well, that's by the way.

SMITH: What role do the museums play in Harvard's broader goals? The president and the board of overseers, how do they conceive the museums?

COOLIDGE: It's interesting to think that the Yale [University] museum [University Art Gallery] was founded about 1830, and the Harvard museum came about by accident. The whole attitude of the administration,



which is not a passionate one, has acceded to the alumni interest in museums. It has been quite visibly something that Harvard isn't deeply interested in. It has a feeling "Well, this could be very expensive. This could involve us in obligations we don't want to get involved in." It has taken alumni pressure to let them develop the Harvard museums. Now, I will prove this point by telling a story that I think is already in print--I'm not quite sure--but it's appropriate perhaps.

The seven members of the corporation-- And the corporation is a Swiss-type presidency. I mean, they really run things. The president is chairman of the board and controls the agenda, but the decisions are not the president's, they're the corporation's. They meet every other Monday pretty much all day and finish, by tradition, at four o'clock. There was a member of the corporation who-- He was one of the first members appointed who was not a Bostonian, and quitting at four o'clock, he was apt to have a couple of hours-- Well, the working day was shot as far as getting home to Baltimore, where he came from. A Bostonian can go into town at four o'clock and still do some work, but if you live a substantial distance outside of Boston, the day is shot. You might as well take a seven o'clock flight and spend three hours looking around Harvard. This man came to see



me at the Fogg roughly every other year--I don't think it was every year. He would talk about how it was doing, and you would talk to him, never impinging on details of the corporation, but quite frankly talking to him about the Fogg's position anyway, or hopes.

As I told you, the visiting committee met on Monday, because they'd rather give up a day of business than a day of weekend. In any case, part of the time they spent meeting with the staff, and at four o'clock in the afternoon the visiting committee was meeting in the print room on the ground floor with me and curators and probably some professors, I don't remember what they were discussing. My wonderful secretary came rushing down to me and said, "Mr. so-and-so has dropped by in your office." There was nothing that was urgent. I was there simply to listen to what was going on. So I went to see him, pretended I had been working in the gallery or something, sat down, and we had as usual a half hour talk. This time he said, "Well, as a matter of fact, we've been discussing the fine arts this day. You know that [Bernard] Berenson died a couple of weeks ago, and the will was presented to the corporation. As you probably knew his intention, he's left [Villa] i Tatti to Harvard. We had quite a little time discussing this. We decided that we wouldn't vote on this. We had pretty



well come to our conclusion, but we would wait and not have a formal vote until our next meeting. But we're pretty certain, as a group, that Harvard's going to refuse I Tatti."

Well, I couldn't wait until the end of our half hour. I rushed down there, and the then chairman was a marvelous man, Harry [Harrison] Tweed, who was a partner in Millbank, Tweed, [Hope, and Hadley] and was referred to as the dean of the New York bar. I don't know if that was just-- But he looked very much as the dean. I simply interrupted him and whispered into his ear what I had heard. He looked around, and then he said, "John's just told me something that I think changes our schedule a little bit." He dismissed all the faculty and then turned to me and the staff and said, "Now, tell the visiting committee what you just told me." I did just that, and then he dismissed me.

The next thing I learned, and was told--I guess this was intended that I should learn--was that at the next meeting the corporation had changed their mind and decided to accept the I Tatti. Well, the function of the visiting committee is precisely to achieve that. They discussed it, and Harry Tweed realized here a group of leading people in the art world, both professional and visitors-- I mean, we might well have had the chairman of



the board of the Metropolitan Museum or the director of the National Gallery [of Art] and a couple of collectors and another professor from Princeton [University] in this group, as well as the brother of a donor, Winthrop or something like that. Apparently, it was just absolutely unanimous: "Harvard can't do this. The art world will never speak to the university again. You can't imagine what this will be." Being the dean of the New York bar, he just went to the members of the corporation in New York, many of them in New York, and said, "Well, look, this is absolutely inconceivable. All the art world and the people I've talked to--I've talked to other people--they all agree." The result was an announcement that the corporation felt that Harvard had made too strong a commitment to accept I Tatti for Harvard to change its mind at this moment! That's the way the corporation expressed their gratitude. [laughter] Well, this reflects, in a way, the Harvard administration's traditional attitude.

The Fogg got started because a man named Pritchard, a student named Pritchard, took a course from Charles Eliot Norton. He became a lawyer, and an elderly woman, a mature woman [Elizabeth Fogg], came to see him one day. She said she wanted to give a memorial to her husband [William Hayes Fogg] and thought of giving it to

Harvard. God knows why. He wasn't Harvard, she wasn't Harvard. Pritchard said, "Why don't you give Harvard an art museum?" So she gave \$200,000 to give Harvard an art museum. And Harvard never refuses money.
[laughter]

That got the Fogg Museum started, and they appointed a professor who had been appointed at the same time as Charles Eliot Norton, but who taught undergraduates practice painting and drawing and had been at Harvard for twenty years. He was made the first director of the Fogg Museum, and didn't know what to do with it. Harvard didn't know what to do with it. When he retired in 1909, they gave it to Edward Forbes. The alumni have created the Fogg.

The corporation only once, in my memory, which goes back to '27, has made a grant of university funds to fine arts. That was something like half a million dollars, and that came out of a lucky accident. I was walking to work one day, always do, and a car pushed its horn. It was the director of the university library. He was going down to the library, and would I like a ride? It was at the light, so he sat there. They were building the Le Corbusier building--

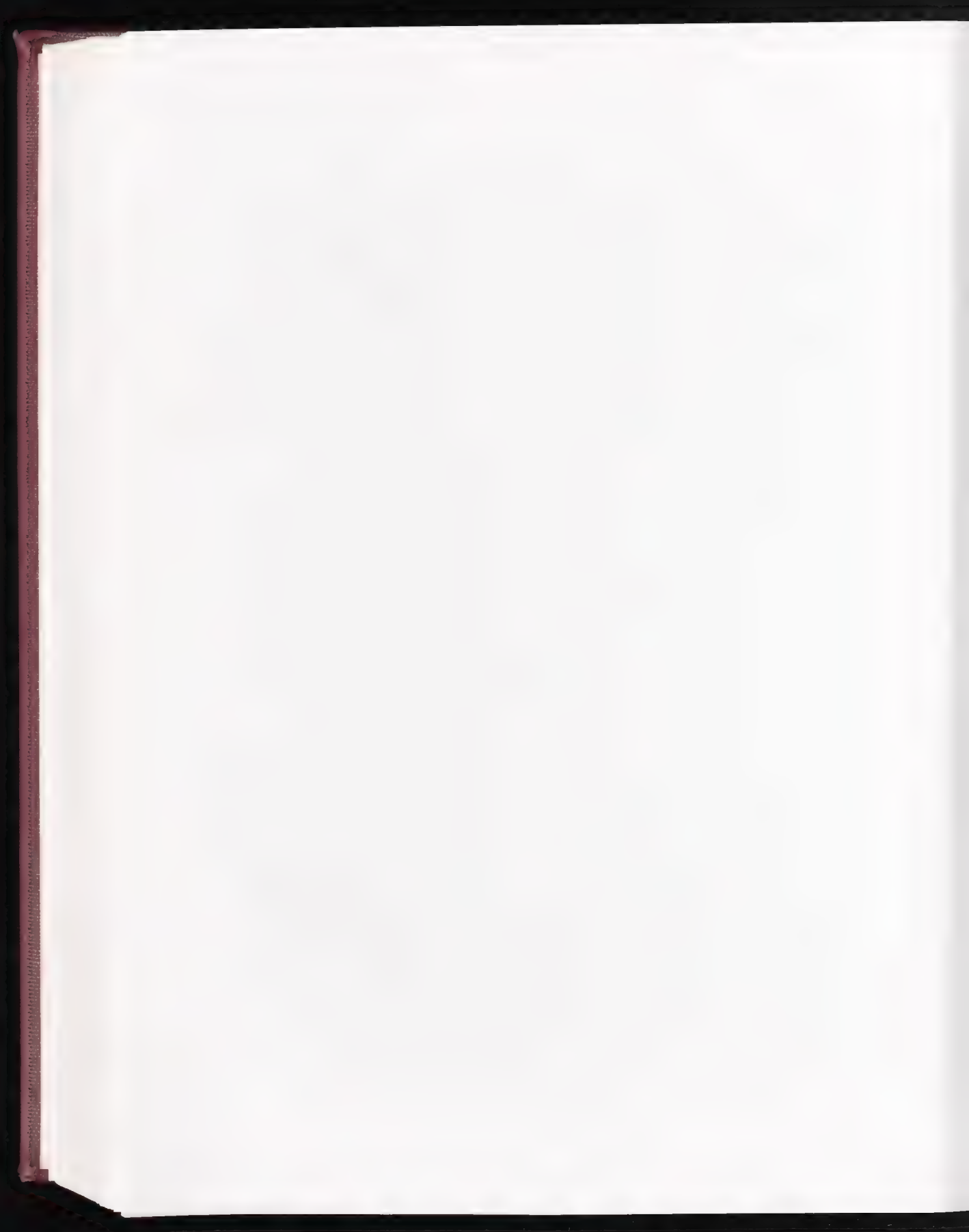
SMITH: The Carpenter Center [for Visual Arts].

COOLIDGE: --the Carpenter Center at this time, which was



a hole in the ground, and adjacent to that-- I don't know which one of us thought of this, but said, "Look, while they're building a hole in the ground here, why don't they enlarge the hole and bring it over to the Fogg basement, sub-basement, and make a storage room, to make storage for the fine arts books," which were then split between Widener [Library] and the Fogg. The corporation paid for that, because that gave them, at a bargain price, space for a hundred thousand books in Widener. That's the only thing they have ever done. They opposed the Sackler [Museum] until the visiting committee not only agreed to pay for it, but to give an additional \$3 million as a sort of sinking fund in case it proved as much of a budgetary burden as they were afraid it would be and all that sort of thing.

The situation was set up in its present form in 1930. Kuno Francke, who was the professor of German culture really, was hired as a member of the German department, but he was a lot more than a linguist. He had persuaded the German-American community, particularly the Busch family, to put up the Busch-Reisinger Museum, but with the backing of the kaiser, the German government. Kuno Francke was the head of that, and he retired in 1930. Then they decided to make the directors of the Fogg-- Edward Forbes had been here twenty years,



and Paul Sachs had been active for a dozen years. They thought they'd make these two people directors of all three museums. It was so that the corporation passed on literally every acquisition. The money for acquisitions was negligible, \$7,000 a year for the entire Fogg, much of this restricted to individual departments. I could spend that \$7,000 as I wished, but I couldn't accept any gifts of works of art without their specific approval. I don't remember that there was even a provision that I could accept works of art worth up to \$1,000. Perhaps I could. In any case, nothing. They supported nothing, and they were very, very watchful of everything.

SMITH: Was that last proviso because they were concerned about you going out and doing your own fund-raising?

COOLIDGE: Which I did. They insisted on that.

SMITH: Well, they insisted on that, but in competition with other Harvard University priorities? Why would they be concerned about restricting bequests or gifts to the Fogg Museum?

COOLIDGE: Oh, very simple. Shortly, I mean perhaps within a week of my being appointed director, a very snobbish aunt of mine invited us in to dinner, and there was an elderly couple. And Polly [Welch Coolidge] must have been particularly nice to the elder gentleman, because-- He proved to be a collector of pistols. He had

the largest collection of pistols at least in America. Within a week, I was informed that he was going to leave the Fogg Museum his collection of pistols. Well, you'd imagine he would insist on, or potentially insist on, them being displayed. This would take a wing, and he would get a name on it. [laughter] All kinds of things could happen if I had said yes. They were afraid of that kind of thing happening. I immediately said no without asking, but they would have questioned the acquisitions, certainly.

SMITH: Well, in that case, pistols have an arguable relationship to an art history museum.

COOLIDGE: The one that they really questioned was a whole group of tapestries, simply because tapestries occupy a lot of space and are very-- All cloth is demanding to maintain, in that you've got to mothproof it and all the rest of it, and why did the Fogg need a collection of tapestries? My successor persuaded them that they were works of art and the Fogg could use them. With the library, they foresee the expense of acquisition just as acquisition, and that's why that's controlled. Curiously, you could sell anything and use the money. That's been changed when the director of the Dumbarton Oaks sold a little Rembrandt for a mere \$50,000 and didn't ask their permission. [laughter] It was worth



probably more, [although] it was a very small [amount] then. It was not worth what it would be worth now.

SMITH: As an art historian and as a museum director, you had a lot of relationships with art collectors.

COOLIDGE: Yes.

SMITH: Were people coming to you to ask you for advice about paintings or objects they were considering acquiring?

COOLIDGE: A story right there, if you want it. The chairman, a new chairman, of the visiting committee was Arthur Houghton. Arthur Houghton was the Corning Glass Works. I guess he was head of the Corning Glass Works. The fundamental thing was that I guess Mr. Houghton started it and had two sons. There are two Houghton families--he was the head of one. But not a very prominent Houghton. The two families, on the whole, don't get on. So if you meet a Houghton and you say, "Are you any relation to Arthur?" be careful. Because he'll say, "Not that bastard!" or vice versa.

Arthur Houghton was a great collector of books. He came to me and said that he was considering a group of Rembrandt drawings, and what did I know about them? I knew nothing, but I said I had heard of them. And indeed I had. I looked at them the next time I was in New York, but a colleague of mine, Seymour Slive, knows all about



such things, and I asked him. He said, "They're perfectly genuine. They're not in the least remarkable." I told Arthur Houghton this.

Virtually simultaneously, I became aware of the fact that what is literally the greatest of Persian illuminated manuscripts owned by the Rothschilds, was for sale, and I told Arthur Houghton. I said, "Look, that's an all right purchase, your Rembrandt, but here is something that is really fabulous. Among Persian manuscripts, it's comparable to the Très riches heures." And Arthur Houghton bought it.

Indeed, the next thing he did was to say that he wanted to publish it in full, and he wanted the publication of this to be the most beautiful book that America had ever produced. Getting back to something we have promised but haven't said, Eric Schroeder and that kind of thing-- Eric Schroeder's pupil [Stuart] Cary Welch owns the greatest collection of Indian miniatures in private hands and buys Persians too, but there aren't as many available, though marvelous. He undertook the publication of this and got a Princeton professor of history to make a new translation. The book is in a staggering two volumes. I have it. I'd show you, but perhaps not in the middle of conversation.

That is the kind of thing that happened. More



generally, an Arthur Houghton would know a Seymour Slive. I was an architectural historian, but Seymour Slive was the drawing person. He would go to Seymour. If Arthur hadn't been a new chairman, I might have sent him to Seymour right away, but I was answering the question he asked and not avoiding it, so to speak.

SMITH: We haven't talked about--in fact we have deferred talking about--Edward Waldo Forbes before. Because you really hadn't known him as an undergraduate.

COOLIDGE: No.

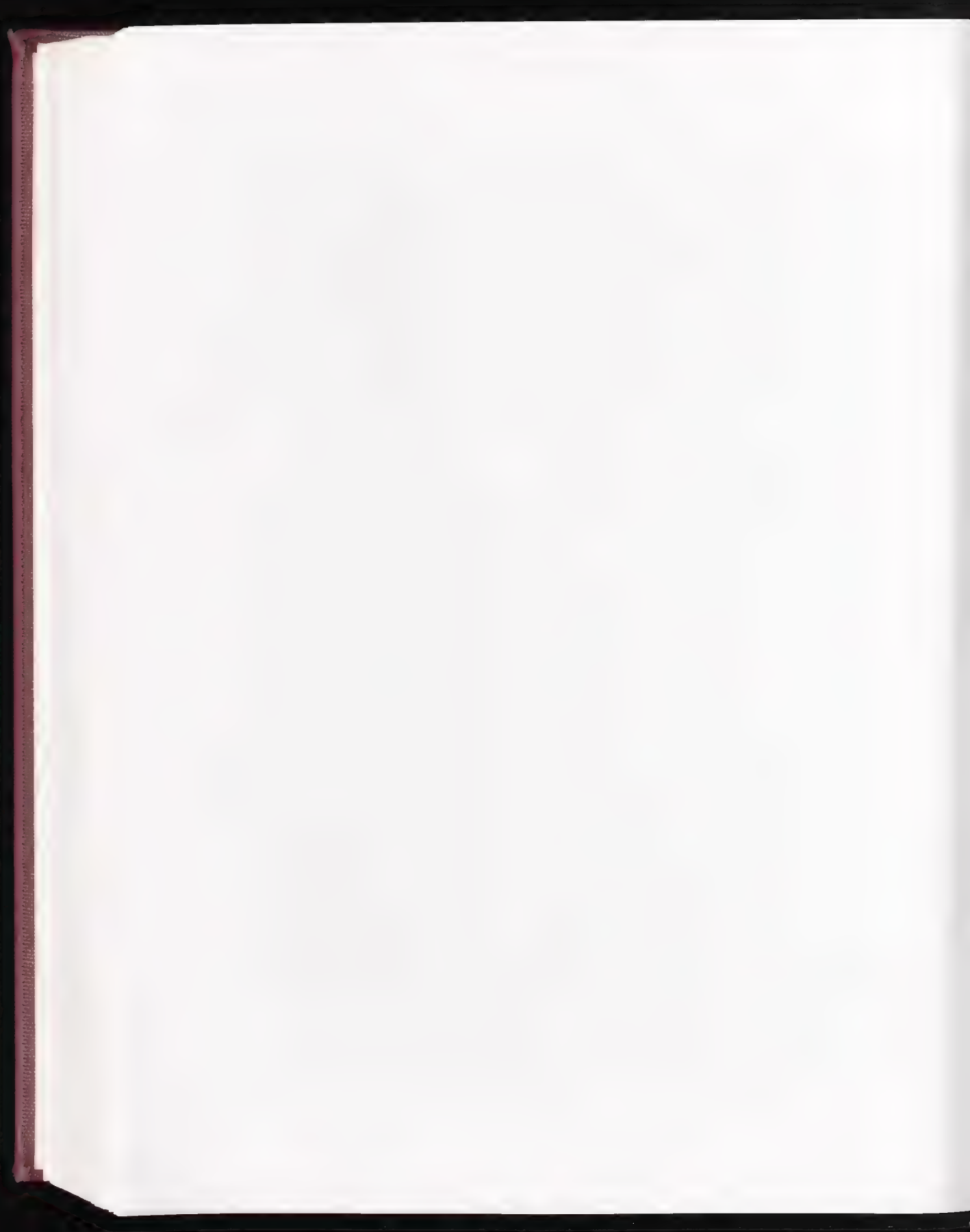
SMITH: At this point, as director, you must have come to know him very well, because he was on your board of overseers.

COOLIDGE: Yes. The chairman of it, briefly. He lived down the street and was a cousin. Polly tells me he asked me to call him "Cousin Edward" and I didn't. I never did call him anything, I certainly should have. That was just shyness on my part. Edward Waldo Forbes was every inch a Forbes, which meant that he was prosperous, or if you want, rich, but not very rich. He was Harvard class of '95, my father [Julian Lowell Coolidge]'s class. He was a cousin of my mother [Theresa Reynolds Coolidge]'s and went from Harvard to Oxford [University] and was there when my father was. And didn't know what he wanted to do. He was a painter, but



not a passionate, serious painter. He really cared about it, but didn't live in a garret and do nothing else. In fact, the first thing that I know of his doing was-- Harvard was of course expanding, this being in the late nineteenth century. While at Oxford he went to Italy, and he started collecting himself Italian paintings. He wasn't rich enough to buy great ones, but he bought interesting small ones.

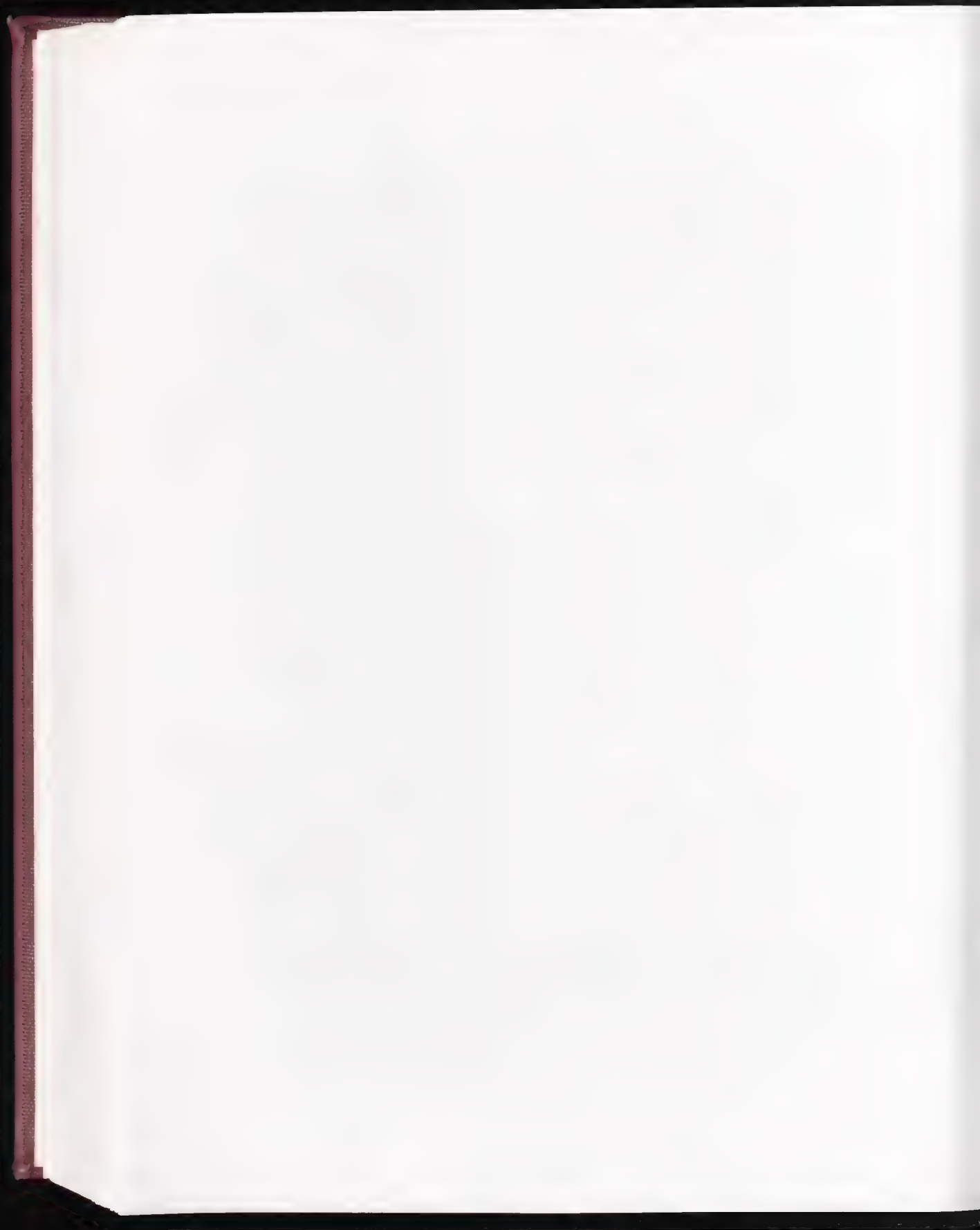
But Harvard was growing, and the Charles River hadn't been dammed then, so that the river up here was mud flats at low tide. I think they had gotten the sewage system out of it, so it wasn't stinking mud flats, but it had been until recently stinking mud flats. So [Charles W.] Eliot, the president, grew Harvard north, this way. Edward Forbes thought this was crazy. There was talk of damming the Charles River, I guess, by this time. But in any case, as a young alumnus in his twenties, he went around to a group of friends and collectively, as a corporation or whatever, they bought up all the land between Harvard Square and the river. They left it as it was, simply collected rent on it, on the theory that when Eliot retired--he'd been by that time president of Harvard for thirty years; he had only ten more years to go, so to speak--the next president who would come along would be aware of the fact that they



would dam the thing here. The river was beautiful, and Harvard could move that way. Indeed that was exactly the way it worked out.

Because Edward Forbes was in Italy,--I guess he went there every summer. The family were living on the north shore on an island there. They were having a background in the China trade. They all sailed a lot. Edward would sail to Europe, swimming off the boat instead of getting a bath. On a calm day, they'd all go in swimming in the mid-Atlantic.

In Italy, he made the acquaintance of one Richard Norton. Richard Norton was Charles Eliot Norton's son and a classical archaeologist, more or less, but also, and in a way that I never fully understood, a Marchant amateur [amateur art dealer]. Charles Eliot Norton collected a little bit, not very well, and there wasn't all that much money, so his collection was sold off. But Richard Norton bought works of art and sold them. He had some kind of a bad reputation. I should have pressed Forbes and Sachs, or Berenson, all of them knowing what it was. Because if you look up, he's in the DAB [Dictionary of American Biography], and you'll find that he was the first director of the American Academy in Rome, because he was classical, and that he raised the money for an ambulance in World War I. He was all kinds



of good things. One has the impression he was run out of Boston by something or other.

He heard that Edward Forbes was buying pictures-- Forbes may have bought a picture from him. He heard that Edward Forbes when he got more pictures than knew what to do with gave a few, or would give one now and then, to the Boston Museum. He said, "That's a damned fool thing to do. Why don't you give them to the Fogg Museum? They don't have any pictures of the kind you buy." Edward Forbes gave a picture or two then. I guess the combination of raising money and being a painter who had bought pictures and given them away was the basis on which Eliot appointed Forbes the director.

Forbes was an absolutely astonishing man. He was a man of contradictions. He was perhaps the most inarticulate man I've ever known. When I was director, he would say, "Can I have a minute of your time?" And of course he could come in. Well, a minute would be an hour and a half of mumbling things, generally with a kernel of interest here, but it would take a long time to come out.

One of the great things he had was an eye, marvelous judgment of quality in works of art. The quality of the Fogg collection is fundamentally because he had that. It's not that what he was able to buy with very limited funds was so remarkable. He would spot good things and



tell people about them, and they would buy them for the Fogg. Everyone knew that he had a marvelous eye for good works of art, so he was great with collectors.

In addition to his eye, he had vision. The perception that Harvard should grow towards the river was no accident. This was a man of vision. Coming into a university museum that the university didn't know what to do with-- And no university museum-- The Yale museum hadn't proved very much. It had formed a collection, which we had, but it hadn't stood for very much. He had the vision of the museum as the "laboratory of the art department."

Another thing that he had-- Which was extraordinary, because he was socially the most casual person. He was also socially the most conventional person. He went to Oxford, and he knew, I suspect, only boys who'd been to public schools, normal things. He entertained people from Beacon Hill or Milton or whatever. So he entertained people from Milton. He wasn't the sort of person who looked around for interesting human beings, particularly. But he had the vision.

He became aware of Paul Sachs, who had majored in fine arts, who was ten years younger than Edward Forbes. Paul Sachs was the son of Samuel Sachs, who was the head of Goldman Sachs [Company]. Paul was the nephew of Mr.



Henry Goldman. Sam Sachs was running Goldman Sachs, and Paul Sachs was a very able young banker, clearly headed to succeed his father as head of Goldman Sachs. Paul Sachs was a passionate collector. Edward Forbes persuaded Paul Sachs to come to Harvard to be associate director. Paul told his family that he was leaving. They said, "To do what?" He said, "To go to Cambridge for a job that has no name"--these were his words--"that has no defined function and pays no salary." But he came here and plunged in with Edward Forbes to realizing this dream, with a vision.

They were utterly complementary people. Paul Sachs was little, strikingly little. Edward Forbes was my size within possibly an inch: five eight, five ten, that sort of thing. Just average build. Paul Sachs was distinctly small. Edward Forbes was a little lanky, lean. Paul Sachs was a little plump. The Sachs were haute-juiverie. Paul Sachs knew all and was part of New York Jewish society. That group, which owing to Eliot's brilliance had been accepted at Harvard as young people in the nineties or early-- As they were not at Yale and Princeton [University], which is why Harvard has a Strauss Hall, a Lehman Hall, and so forth and so on. Of Edward Forbes, J. P. Morgan said, "When Edward Forbes arrives, I always realize that it saves time, and so much



time, if I go to my checkbook right away. He just will not understand why I cannot afford to give him the money that he needs." He knew the J. P. Morgans; he knew all that type. And he was determined that he could raise money. But he was also sweet and the soul of gentlemanliness and pleasant to have around. If you were interested in works of art, he enjoyed them and would say how nice they were.

SMITH: Did he continue to do fund-raising for the Fogg while you were director?

COOLIDGE: No. They agreed to quit after the new director had been appointed. In the last year they raised \$50,000, but they raised it by saying to all these people--Maurice Wertheim told me this specifically--that "This is the last time we will ever come to you again, and as a friendship to us, as well as to the Fogg, won't you give something extra this year?" Well, I went around to these people, and they said that we'd said that we'd never come to you again. [laughter]

Forbes taught Italian painting for a year or two, and he did it so badly that his colleagues asked him to give it up. He never taught a history of art course again. Instead, he got interested in the craft of painting. From this, he got interested in restoration and created the first conservation department in this



country, with all kind of intelligent and useful things beside it. For example, he realized that if he were restoring a Dutch seventeenth-century painting, you should use the same kind of pigments that they used. He made a collection, which is visible in the Fogg now, of raw pigments from all historic periods. Since in any conservation department, all you need is a dab, he got small bottles about this size, and every conservation department in this country starts out by borrowing a little of this kind of blue and a little of that kind of green from the things that are all up in a case on the wall in the Fogg.

He had a friend, again younger, ten years younger, another friend, who was interested in oriental art, Langdon Warner. And Langdon Warner was, again, a Bostonian. He started collecting art for the Fogg. He was an unconventional but great teacher. He became the father of American curators of oriental art. It is his pupils who have formed the collections at Kansas City [at the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art], and then taken over the collections at Boston [at the Museum of Fine Arts] and New York and so forth. Rich collectors have given the Fogg something between a respectable and a remarkable collection of oriental art. I guess one would say it was remarkable, except that the Boston Museum is



so outstanding that you always think of the Fogg collection as so much less than the Boston Museum. I think that anywhere else it would rank very well. This was Langdon Warner's doing entirely.

Langdon Warner got to know a New Yorker who was collecting oriental art, a man named Grenville Winthrop. Grenville Winthrop was an old Harvard man, but one of the Winthrops. He found Langdon Warner and Edward Forbes sympathetic types, and so the Winthrop collection of thirty-five hundred objects of superlative quality and the greatest diversity are at Harvard. Early on, he bought a few Italian paintings, and not very good ones, and then shifted. He has a collection of Pre-Raphaelites that he got-- Well, you know the Winthrop collection. But actually it was Langdon Warner and the oriental aspect that persuaded Winthrop to give the thing to the Fogg. His Chinese bronzes would be well cared for here, and the drawings and the paintings came along too. Forbes meanwhile was talking to the Strausses and the Loeb's and the Warburgs.

SMITH: At the time you were director, it's my impression that the Pre-Raphaelites were not valued as highly as they are now. They had gone into somewhat of an eclipse in terms of their reputation. Did that affect how many of them you would exhibit at a time?



COOLIDGE: Well, in the first place, there was no teaching involved with the Pre-Raphaelites. What you say was absolutely true. The Winthrop collection came in '43 and immediately went into safe storage up in the country. During the war all of the Fogg collection was out. I came in '48, and the collection was back and hung. But the Forbes/Sachs generation, [Arthur] Pope, just didn't see Pre-Raphaelites at all. I hung them in quantity two or three times, but I thought--and I could be wrong--that this was one area in which Winthrop just didn't get the best. I mean, there were single ones that were just remarkable paintings, as they began to come into fashion, I would find-- I can remember particularly at Hartford [Wadsworth Athenaeum], which had a way of getting marvelous pictures, they bought a Pre-Raphaelite that was just so much better than ours. I found that when they were up for these shows, they palled, and I concluded that this was just my reaction to the fact that he had collected them too soon and he had been ill advised. Now they're part of the teaching program and are brought out for that. I don't find them any better as Pre-Raphaelites go than I did then. But I'm not teaching Pre-Raphaelites. The basic reason was that nobody was using them for teaching. To that I added my own estimate of them as quality.



Forbes was into conservation. Fogg had fabulous works of art that were repainted. He bought a Botticelli, for instance, that everybody was convinced was a nineteenth-century copy, a fake. He thought differently.

SMITH: That's the one in the collection with the streaks?

COOLIDGE: That's right. He, however, had the vision to get it copied, the best local copiest. He made a faithful copy of the thing, of the object he bought, and then he had it cleaned and found what is a perfectly genuine Botticelli.

TAPE NUMBER: IX, SIDE ONE

APRIL 11, 1991

SMITH: Perhaps we could talk a little about the museum course [Seminar on Art Museum Problems] and Paul [J.] Sachs's heritage. Perhaps also Jakob Rosenberg, because, as I understand, you and Rosenberg co-taught the museum course for a period of time.

COOLIDGE: Very briefly.

SMITH: When Sachs retired and Rosenberg took over the course--

COOLIDGE: No.

SMITH: No?

COOLIDGE: In the first place, Sachs was ten years younger than [Edward Waldo] Forbes. They retired together, but Sachs remained a professor. He taught the museum course while Arthur Pope was director. I think he gave it up with the war, but he was teaching for a year or so while I was director. I may say--because this is relevant but isn't said--one of the summers I was here in summer school, I took Sachs's course on the French impressionists. Sachs was in a league with Karl Lehmann as a teacher. I've never heard other people say-- He was a fabulous lecturer. Not original. He got good slides, and then he could convey the quality of the works of art

in an extraordinary way. He just put it over. I'm not particularly fond of the impressionist period. I wouldn't have worked on impressionism the way I worked on early Flemish painting. I don't feel about the impressionists. My gosh, what a course he taught. He can teach!

Harvard felt that this activity should continue. The first two years, perhaps three, that I was director, there was no museum course. Then Charles Kuhn, Jakob Rosenberg, and I taught it jointly. We did that for a couple of years. I think Charles Kuhn dropped out after one year, and then Rosenberg did it, and thereafter I did it alone. I think neither of the others particularly wanted to do it. I felt it was my obligation to do it, and I did enjoy it. I think they really got out of it when they thought it wouldn't be a disgrace if I gave it. SMITH: Let's discuss how you defined, how you shaped the course.

COOLIDGE: Well, in the first place, in Sachs's day, there wasn't much of a limit on the number of graduate students, and that was also true immediately after the war because of the GI Bill of Rights. Let's say before '55, I can remember when the department of fine arts was getting thirty brand-new graduate students a year. It dropped to twenty-five or so and stayed that way for



quite a while. Then the university realized that graduate students were enormously expensive, that not all of them were getting jobs, and they set up a committee to make a study of the graduate students in the faculty of arts and sciences. Bob [Robert E.] Wolf, a good friend, was the chairman of this, and he came back with a recommendation concerning the total number of graduate students there should be, tying this into demography, how many people there would be, and of course estimates of the history of the different disciplines. This cut us down from twenty-five to some fifteen students, and it's now down to twelve, I think, average.

SMITH: New students admitted every year?

COOLIDGE: New students admitted every year. If you expect to end up with fifteen, you admit eighteen, knowing that three will go elsewhere. Or sometimes six go elsewhere; sometimes none go elsewhere. The university forces you to average it out. But, in any case, in Sachs's day, you had a relatively large number of students, and students who from the start were obviously going into museum work, were just museum types. Perry Rathbone, for one. They were normally Ph.D. candidates, and some of them did go on for Ph.D.'s. When the student body was reduced to fifteen, the department cut down on the number of museum-bound students. It had



to be a pretty exceptional person, who would beat out an equally exceptional academic type.

I came to see the museum course as an introduction to museums for potential collectors, art historians, you name it, the people interested in art, but not necessarily going into running museums. I don't know and haven't bothered to find out-- I don't know why. Perhaps being afraid that I would be influenced. I don't know how PJ ran his course in detail, but I do know that it was for the people who were going into museums, whereas mine was not.

SMITH: I've read, actually, the stenographic notes that he had taken--

COOLIDGE: Ha! [laughter]

SMITH: Not all of them, but a good chunk of them. He constantly is referring to the museum person as being in the world and the academic as being in the closet.

[laughter] And this was a course for people who wanted to be in the world and not in the closet.

COOLIDGE: Yes.

SMITH: And without accepting his value judgments, you seem to have inverted it, then.

COOLIDGE: If you were going into museums, it would be normal to take this course, but it wasn't geared toward that.



SMITH: Well, Harvard is known for having produced many museum people. Is what you're saying, then, that these are art historians, or academic types, who instead of going to the university went to the museum for various reasons? It wasn't their first choice necessarily.

COOLIDGE: I can't put my finger on this. I would describe it to you, and if I find it, show it to you. Part of the museum course was field trips. I had a big field trip which was middle western, and you would visit a museum, any one of them. Roughly half the day--well, no, a good two hours of the day--the kids were free to wander around the museum, and the rest of the time you would meet with the director and various curators and so forth. Wherever the kids wandered, I would wander too. Very often we would be together looking at a picture. In Toledo, the Toledo Blade wrote a report on the visit of these people. And there is a picture, copyright Toledo Blade, of me standing in front of a portrait and three students in the museum course. This was taken in '64, or thereabouts. Somebody sent me this. I know about this because as a Christmas card somebody sent a copy of the annual report of the Fogg [Art Museum] for that year, which had this photograph taken by the Toledo Blade. The point being that the three students are now president of Vassar [College] [Frances Fergusson], the dean of the



school of art attached to the Boston Museum [of Fine Arts] [Bruce MacDonald]--it's part of the Boston Museum--and the director of the Picasso Museum in Paris [Gérard Regnier]. So in a sense, this is the audience that I was speaking to. Frances Fergusson never worked in a museum--she's always taught--and for that matter the dean of the school has never worked in a museum. I was thinking of it in these terms, and this is just a mixed pictorial of what it was and the kind of person that you were getting.

Basically, there were, to begin with, topics. The first meeting I think we would do a thorough tour of the Fogg, top to bottom. This would be the case where you'd see why a roof leaked by looking at the skylights and the way the laylights worked, as well as the details of how a painting borrowed for an exhibition was uncrated and where the crates were stored, because when the painting was returned, you would need to use the same crate. It was this kind of thing. It wasn't looking in galleries. There would be a similar session that met once a week all afternoon for finances: where the money came from, how it was spent, why it was spent this way, how much you had to set aside for pensions and medical things for every salary dollar, stuff that was completely new to graduate students.



You also would frequently take field trips, and these would cover the principal local museums, the Boston Museum, the Worcester [Art] Museum, the Springfield Museum [of Fine Arts] perhaps. This sort of thing. Then a trip to New York, where you might go to a private collector. In New York you'd go probably to two dealers. A small personal one, and always a favorite one of mine, was the Georges Wildenstein [Gallery], and they were marvelous tours. We got marvelous treatment. I'll never forget Georges Wildenstein coming into his palatial office, a little roly-poly man, and producing these fabulous pictures. The kids were free to ask questions, and they did. Someone asked, "Do you have a problem with cleaning pictures, or restoring pictures?" "Oh, yes," he said. "As a matter of fact, the pictures can be restored by my staff, but the cleaning I do all myself. And you may notice that when you shook hands with me, my hand was wet. Actually, I've come from the laboratory." Okay, QED. It may be largely a lie, but his hand was wet, and you knew that a serious dealer took these things seriously.

So you did that, but you also had lectures from a variety of outside people. I always had a very popular person. At least two of them did it terribly well. One was the chairman of the board of the Metropolitan Museum



[of Art]. Because it would be years before they met the chairman of the board, and the popular image of the trustee can be so different from the actual person of the trustee. What a certain kind of successful businessman finds are the problems. A guy like that talking about labor relations-- You knew in theory that these things existed, but they'd never heard the person speak to them. I might have a dealer come in--although we were more apt to go to dealers--and certainly kinds of collectors that were appropriate. You tried to cover pretty much every aspect of museum work. One of the basic things that you started out with and they always resented was we'd go to the Boston Museum, each one of them--generally making them do this in alphabetical order, so there was no feeling of my playing favorites or whatever--talking for fifteen minutes to the group about a work of art of their choice. This to show that because they could write didn't mean they could talk. And what a skill it was! I wasn't very good at it. Agnes [Mongan] is fabulous at it. I'm not particularly good at it. It was for them to see that everybody in the museum world ends up doing this.

SMITH: A work that they had not chosen before going to the--?

COOLIDGE: No, I mean I tell you that, "In the first week



of November we're going to the Boston Museum, and by that time I will expect each of you to have picked out a work of art that you'll tell us about." So it was their choice. They had the chance to make themselves expert on it, but they had to make their expertise interesting. Above all, they realized instinctively that they couldn't be specialized about it. Simply because the artist had changed his mind, and you could just stand over there and when the light falls this way on it you can see the pentimento, the way it was originally done-- That's fascinating, but that can be only part of the fifteen minutes.

I was by then an ex officio trustee at the Boston Museum, which meant that when I asked for somebody from the education department at the Boston Museum to come to this session and criticize the talks, the education department didn't say, "We're too busy." This was what you could do being a trustee. They would stand there and begin by telling them sentence things: "Why do you say 'er' all the time? Can't you talk the way you read? You don't say 'er' when you're--" You know, this kind of thing about it. "And why don't you-- You shouldn't let your audience stand over there. You should figure out the best light for them to stand and tell them to stand there." All this kind of thing.



The one thing that I took from Paul's course, from PJ's course-- He had all his students collectively put on an exhibition. I observed that in that kind of arrangement, oh, two students out of eight substantially did all the work. One of them, a third one, might tape the labels, but, you know, a couple of people would do it. I tried one year having each student do his own little exhibition, but that was quite a burden on the staff, to have eight brief exhibitions based on the Fogg collection. So I had groups of two, and they put on an exhibition with pairs.

SMITH: The exhibitions could only draw on works within the Harvard collections?

COOLIDGE: Yes, or if there was something really outstanding that would make a great point that a friend owned, you could borrow that. Mind you, there was some kind of phony typed and xeroxed catalog, some kind of opening--the works.

SMITH: Are there any of these mini-exhibitions that stand out in your mind?

COOLIDGE: Yes, one particularly which was put on by the man who became the director of the Walters Art Gallery [Richard Randall], and the man, Tom [Thomas M.] Messer, who's just retired as director of the [Solomon R.] Guggenheim [Museum]. We had a series of--what shall I



say?--cubicles, a long gallery, and then with "V"-shaped walls projecting out towards the windows. It was side lit, so that you came down, as it were, down here, and there would be a partition running out to the end of that table there. Then a second one there, so that you had six of these cubicles. They got an original work of art, a good work of art from the Fogg, and had it well photographed and got, as near as the Fogg photographer could do--which was pretty damn good--it copied six or eight times. The first cubicle was devoted to what is the object. Is it a preliminary sketch? Is it a fragment? Was it clearly made for another work? If it was clearly a preliminary sketch for another work, they tacked up a photograph of the work for which it was. If it was a fragment, they would show you why it was a fragment. They might take one of the photographs of the thing and show the line within it which was restored, the line of restoration, presumably hidden. But, what is it? What is the object we're looking at? Okay. Is it fake or is it real? Next cubicle: What school is it? Flemish? Dutch? French? Italian? So you would have a French landscaping. All right, this was a Dutch landscape. You have a French landscape and the Dutch landscape and the Italian landscape, all with brief but clear labels.



SMITH: So to get this clear for me, the examples of the French, Dutch, and Italian would be actual paintings.

COOLIDGE: Would be actual paintings. They were actual paintings, sure.

SMITH: But there would still be this reproduction that would be the key.

COOLIDGE: That would send you back to the original. They hung the original in whatever cubicle they wanted, where it was most effective. Perhaps it was most effective along with copies and fakes and restored works of art.

SMITH: I see.

COOLIDGE: That kind of thing. But in any case, you had finally what artist and in what period. You start with an unknown object and you end with an object completely labeled, and what were the processes of analysis by which they got there. Because it's at undergraduate, at popular level, at public level, it isn't a great deal of research work to find an appropriate Italian and Dutch object to play off against. But it was a good exhibition.

SMITH: Very few exhibits show the kind of analytic work that you're talking about.

COOLIDGE: No.

SMITH: Do you think that's something that might be done



more?

COOLIDGE: Sure. As long as it's interesting. Because this was for an academic community. All of us do this in our teaching every day, and every lecture we give and analyze what we do makes you go back to think about whether you're doing it just by habit or whether you could do it better. Or whether they have done it clumsily and you could do it better. Well, that was the best thing. They didn't do much with contemporary art because it's awkward. It's so much easier to play with the Fogg's collections or things from Houghton Library. But, okay, you can take the work of an artist who's very little known, artist Edward Lear. Or you could take, should we say, Edward Lear and his writing: Is there anything that is essentially Lear that appears both in his writing and his art? And put that across. This scale of idea was what they did.

Perhaps the most popular thing was an exercise dealing with acquisition. This tended to go late in the course, partly because it took more homework than the others. The sum of money involved for them was \$75. I think if one were doing it today, it would be at least \$250. But based on that amount, some amount-- You, imagined an amount. "And here you are. You, a student, have \$250. Go and buy the work of art you like most



within the range of Route 128." Why the range of Route 128 was basically-- You can get to almost anywhere you want within 128 by public transportation. Rich students would have private cars and could easily go to New York. The poor students would find it difficult to get there except by public transportation. So that leveled everything off.

SMITH: What kind of radius of the Cambridge area are we talking about?

COOLIDGE: Well, it was fifteen miles from Boston.

SMITH: Okay.

COOLIDGE: But, I mean, you can get there by public transportation. You can take the subway to Quincy. It's this kind of thing. "A work of art, anything, any kind of work of art. You borrow this work of art for the Fogg Museum." And I give them all a letter saying who they are and he would like to borrow a work of art. If the position was sticky, he would come to me the week before. I would call up the dealer and ask if they could borrow this. I can't remember a time when they weren't able to borrow one. So these half dozen works of art would appear. We met in a big room, in our big room. I don't know if you've ever been there.

SMITH: No.

COOLIDGE: It was a curious gift that the Fogg received.



A couple in New York left the Fogg their apartment, which meant their dining room and living room, "to serve as a living room for the museum." This is a big Jacobean living room that's a splendid thing to have. It's just a living room, a Jacobean living room.

Well, you bring your things in there and you turn up. And I have produced a jury. I tried to get a collector, a curator, and an artist. All three, they had no connection with the Fogg. This was not Fogg staff at all. They were outsiders, generally connected to the Boston Museum, because they were easy people for me to find, but it could be anybody. Each student was like a curator facing the acquisitions committee. He told why he thought his object was marvelous. When they were through, we left the acquisitions committee and generally retired to my office, sat around and relaxed, would ask each other questions of "Where did you get it?" or even "Why did you--?" You knew where they'd gotten it actually, of course, because that was part of the presentation earlier in the day. Then the self-elected chairman of the jury would come back and tell us they're through, and the chairman would tell us which was the best object, which one had spent the money the best.

The student who had spent the best got the object. The director of the Fogg Museum, under the discretionary



fund, bought the object for the individual. Knowing at the start that you had a chance to get the object you liked, you put a certain amount into it. But also, of course, there were all kinds of kids who knew about this. There were kids who were married recently, and there was money left over from their wedding present. So out of eight, perhaps as many as three would be bought, because the kids who didn't get theirs awarded to them were so keen on it that they managed to buy it themselves. Of course, that meant that the dealers all knew that not only was the shop advertised, but there was a good chance that the object would be sold. Of course we had gone and talked to the dealers and had got them thinking about that, but what this was about really, was above all the kind of comments that the jury made, what a curator would encounter from the acquisitions committee of his board of trustees.

You could bring two objects in if you wanted. If you found a \$45 object that was marvelous, you could have the \$30 to spend on another. Well, this person had \$75 dollars, but had spent \$45 on one of those [Marcel] Breuer wicker chairs. Now they're everywhere. These were rare, and it is one of the great modern chairs. One member of the jury said, "Well, this is just a reproduction." The student said, "Well, aren't prints



reproductions? Why is this any different, in terms of originality, from a print?" Well, he didn't get the prize. I thought that that was well said. We did once get Paul Sachs on the jury after he had really retired and the students never knew him.

SMITH: Oh, really?

COOLIDGE: A student came in with a drawing, and he said, "What a fabulous drawing." It was a [Pier] Francesco Mola. "Why, it's so much better than this one I bought for the Fogg!" And it was indeed, and the kid had found this. Of course this is a kick for the rest of life, that you had outsmarted a good collector of drawings and he admitted it.

In other words, you tried to cover every aspect of the social and practical side of museum work, with levels of quality when it was relevant. So that you saw the museum, in some sense, as a totality. This prepared you to specialize. If you're just going as a visitor, you wouldn't criticize exhibitions in quite the same way.

SMITH: Perhaps we could talk a little about Jakob Rosenberg, as he was your print curator, right?

COOLIDGE: Yes.

SMITH: And of course, he had been part of the old regime.

COOLIDGE: That's right. As had Agnes Mongan.



SMITH: Right.

COOLIDGE: As had the librarian. They were a marvelous staff, and in fact only once did I have to make a major appointment. I couldn't find what I wanted, so I put in a person who was competent, but neither was paid nor had the pretensions of being the stature that I wanted, and I used the money saved to get a better person elsewhere. In general, I felt about museums that your only obligation is to preserve them. If you cannot find a staff member who can explicate them adequately, use the money to get somebody else, get a curator in another field. Keep quality that way, if you can. Prints weren't important, and you keep everything at the level of self-education, but that doesn't take a genius of a curator.

Jakob. Jakob had the reputation-- The person in this area was Paul Sachs, who started out as a print collector and moved into drawings when he moved up in the firm. Jakob had, Paul Sachs maintained, the best eye in Europe. When he was forced to leave Germany, Paul Sachs made tremendous efforts to get him here. It was very difficult, because there was already a print curator here, who'd been here actually since the founding of the museum and who was retiring shortly, but hadn't retired when they got Jakob teaching in the summer school. They



kept [Rosenberg] one way or the other until the print curator vacancy fell vacant. He had very little money to collect, but used it brilliantly. Among other things, he built a very good collection of Picasso prints, which in the thirties were not highly regarded, so that they were not expensive. He was able to build up a first-rate collection with very little expenditure. Otherwise, spending it all over the lot, over a collection that was something like sixty thousand prints, and so it was pretty good.

SMITH: How deeply did you involve yourself in the acquisitions that your curators were involved in?

COOLIDGE: They always had to show it to me. Every acquisition had to be approved by the corporation, and I wrote the letter of recommendation. I can't remember whether I wrote a letter to the dean, who forwarded it to the corporation, or if I wrote it to the corporation, but it was sent to the dean and it had to go up the line. Jakob could write me a paragraph telling me why it was important; I had that. I therefore had to approve, and did approve, me personally, every acquisition, and often had Jakob with me. He'd come to me after a New York trip and say, "I've seen a wonderful Picasso print after his Guernica, and I asked it to be sent up" or something like that, or even show me from an illustration what the print



was. It was a personal relation between me and the curator, and it was treated as their recommendation to me as to what I should buy, or what I should recommend that the corporation buy for the Fogg.

SMITH: To what degree would the teachers of a particular subject area be involved with the decision? In that instance would you have brought in [Frederick] Deknatel, just to get an opinion from a teaching point of view?

COOLIDGE: Yes, but I might ask him, "Have you shown it to Deknatel, and what did he say?" More apt to do that than the other. But also, in the case of a Picasso, since Deknatel was teaching Picasso-- Jakob knew more about Picasso's prints than Deknatel did, but he knew that Deknatel would be the one who was using it and that Deknatel would be the one who was thrilled by its acquisition, so he would have done it. George Hanfmann was the teacher of classical art. It was pretty automatic-- Though I did not hesitate to collect in areas in which nobody was teaching-- Because the great weakness of the Fogg setup is that you are expected at an undergraduate level to teach what is popular. Collectively the department has to teach the art that is of importance today. A course in Greek or Roman copies you might give once, but not more than once. Therefore, while you might buy a Greek or Roman copy, you would not



feel it right to create a collection of Greek or Roman copies, because it's something that's too apart from any real interest or likelihood of real interest.

I like baroque art, and the area that was most neglected in this country was German baroque, so I bought German baroque. I believed in the baroque. I believed it was a coming discipline, and we had a museum devoted to Germanic art. Good stuff was available, and it was a likely thing to teach. That you could do. But something that was unlikely--

For example, the whole field of decorative arts is weak at the Fogg, because why? Because we discovered that people only really get passionate about the decorative arts when they have their own home. When they marry and have a home, when they have a home to furnish. They come to college to learn about the great monuments of culture and to learn about an aspect of Asiatic art that has just been discovered as great. Easter Island, if you wish.

The problem with that is, of course, that those are precisely the most expensive things, because those are things that collectors are looking for. We have a Giotto. I suppose the most useful single thing the Fogg could have-- Well, I was going to say a Titian, but you've got the [Isabella Stewart] Gardner [Museum]



Titian. All right, a Michelangelo. Even if one came on the market, you couldn't afford it.

So you can't be limited to teaching unless you're teaching in experimental areas. I mean, you can buy a [Jackson] Pollock when they're teaching Pollocks, and they should be teaching Pollock when you're buying it. You can buy a Pollock hoping that when the old fuddy-duddy who's teaching contemporary art retires, you'll get somebody who will use it. But you can't automatically do it this way. Well, Jakob therefore would never think of buying a print that wasn't either being taught or wasn't likely to be taught by another generation of experts in the field.

SMITH: How much did you consider ongoing doctoral work or likely dissertations in your acquisitions?

COOLIDGE: Anything that was doctoral would be taught. It doesn't mean that there weren't doctoral dissertations on oddball things. A doctoral dissertation on, shall we say, porcelain, you probably wouldn't-- That's perfectly permissible as a doctoral dissertation, but it wouldn't be taught. Anyone who is interested in writing a doctoral dissertation on porcelain is going into museum work anyway. There you have the Boston Museum, and you're not competing with the Boston Museum. In a pinch, you call up the curator there and say, "This seems



perfectly fabulous and belongs in your collection.

Certainly, it doesn't really belong in ours."

SMITH: For instance, one could accumulate an impressive collection of Picasso prints on the assumption that that collection itself will generate at least one, and maybe more than one, doctoral dissertation.

COOLIDGE: That's right. Absolutely. Similarly, one would not have hesitated to buy something in the Pre-Raphaelites, even though I didn't particularly care about it and there was nobody teaching it, because surely somebody would come to teach it in a generation.

Anything which had been that important to Anglo-Saxondom in the past becomes important in the future.



TAPE NUMBER: IX, SIDE TWO

APRIL 11, 1991

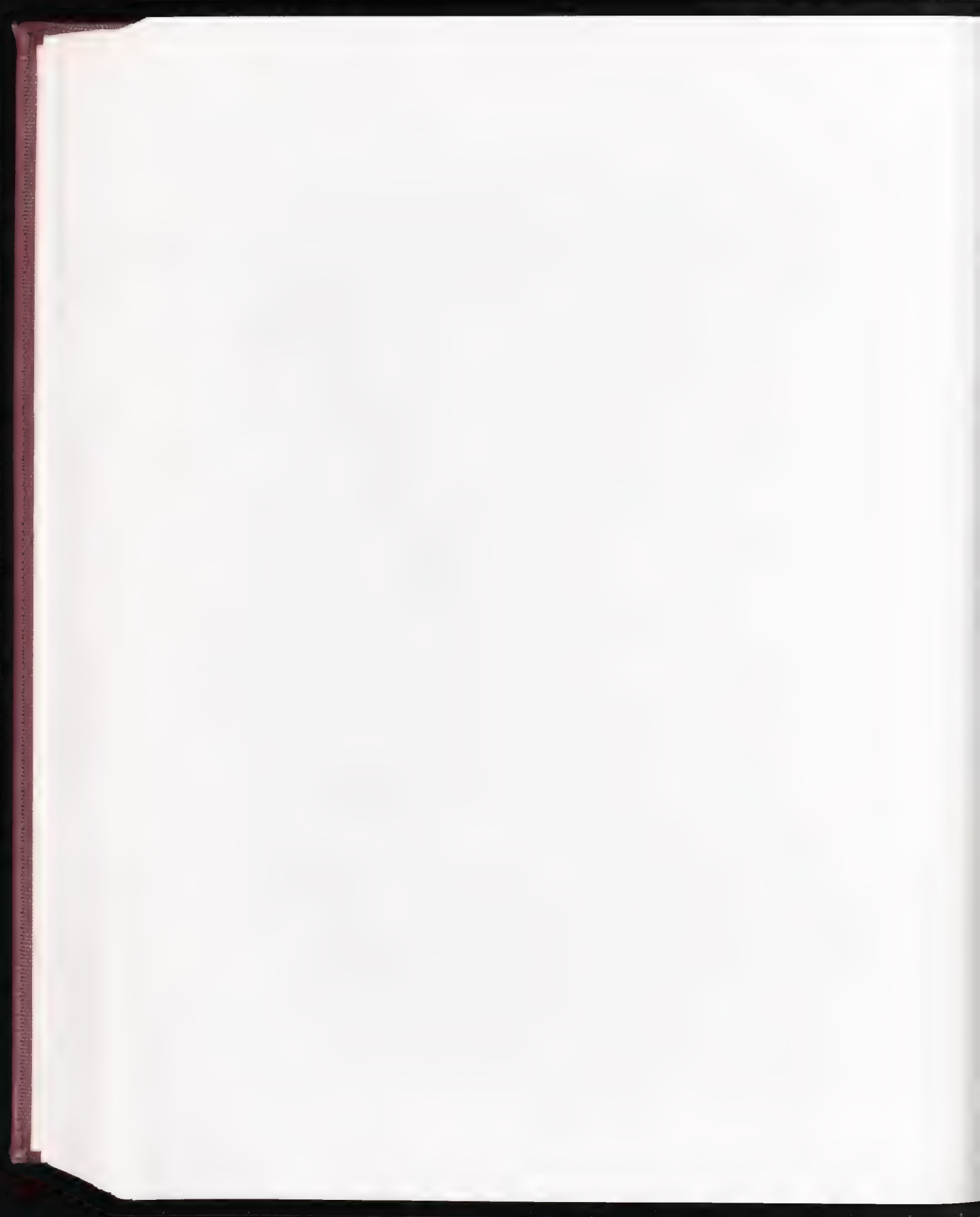
COOLIDGE: I'm going to turn this around for a moment, if I might, which is to think directly of what I knew I was conscious of accomplishing. Let's see if I've covered everything. Well, on purchase: I thought Persian miniatures were fabulously beautiful. We had a great collection of drawings. We had every other kind of art on paper. They were wholly out of fashion. *[We had Eric Schroeder, our honorary curator, an extraordinary expert and an inspiring teacher. His efforts to build up the collection were supported and continued by his pupils John Coelet and especially Stuart Cary Welch. I encouraged the three of them to develop this area wholly on my own initiative, without consulting the department or the remaining museum staff.] It ended up by our having the best Islamic art thing in the country, because we had Oleg [Grabar], who was a marvelous teacher. I told you that when I left we were running a surplus. Oleg was teaching at [University of] Michigan and had a grant from the university which would allow him to dig, in any case, a project in the Near East. This was near

* Dr. Coolidge added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.



the end, but would run for at least one year more. He wouldn't leave Michigan and come here if he had to abandon the project. So because I didn't want a precedent to be started, I didn't want professors coming to me, I transferred the money to the dean of the faculty of arts and sciences, and he, as the person who was negotiating with Oleg as a teacher-- When Oleg mentioned that he had this thing with Michigan, the dean said he could match that money, which he would never have done otherwise. Since I didn't play a visible part in it, I'm not generally credited with having pushed the Islamic thing here. As soon as I met Eric Schroeder and realized how cheap these things were, I went after them. It was the good thing to do. Part of going to Arthur Houghton on this was if he was chairman of your visiting committee, the greatest Persian manuscripts might well end up in Harvard's possession. It didn't work out that way for various reasons. But one had that kind of thing in the background.

In the middle thirties, a collection of baroque bozzetti was on the market, baroque bozzetti which Richard Norton had found. He had sculpture sometimes, and he was a little unconventional. He sold to a wealthy Boston family. A change in generations, and the new generation had no interest in these bozzetti. The Fogg



bought them all. Well, that collection of Italian bozzetti contains the largest group--fourteen--of Bernini bozzetti anywhere. So this is, I suppose, our greatest old master possession. Nobody was teaching baroque art at the time, and I don't think a formal course in baroque sculpture has been given since, but they're always on exhibition. It's the kind of thing they get into any lecture on Bernini, and it gets into the introductory course. It's the kind of thing that was not directly used for teaching, but is obviously something that might come up someday. It's the classic case of buying towards potential teaching that I think of.

Eric had been curator of Islamic art at the Boston Museum and was bounced, partly because he didn't write much. He was British. There was this great book, great history of Persian art, that Arthur Upham Pope produced, so big, in many volumes [A Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present]. He did the volume on architecture. When it was a question of buying things, I would very often go not only to members of the department whose visual judgment I trusted, like [Wilhelm] Koehler, who had a wonderful eye, but I would go to Eric Schroeder. Eric Schroeder had a cubist Picasso, bought God knows when, which was left to us and which I had hoped would be left to us. Now we have two 1911



Picassos. It's inconceivable that we could buy what would be likely to be given, rather than sold.

Eric came here and was honorary curator of Persian art and persuaded Edward Forbes to buy Persian art occasionally. He married a Forbes, and then there was no salary, there was nothing to do, and he transferred his interests to a subject most improbable--astrology, magic, the occult. He got into alchemy and such things. Nonetheless, we put on an exhibition, and I bought for him things he'd advised me to. He would write them up. He wrote beautiful English. Then he even taught a course, was delighted to teach it, and he got two young men interested. One was Cary Welch, who was a wealthy young man, or had a certain amount of money. They built up this collection of Indian miniatures. [Schroeder] became the curator of the Persian miniatures here. Eric would recommend that I buy things, and I would buy to his recommendation. The other young man was a guy named Coelet, one of the three brothers who had collectively inherited a huge New York old family real estate fortune. John Coelet, inspired by Eric Schroeder and then by Cary, bought miniatures himself. Then he bought a major single French collection of Persian miniatures and gave that to the Fogg. So this thing was built up there. There's always a Persian gallery in the permanent collection.



Things came in around it. We got one splendid Persian rug, and other things came in. But that whole unit developed out of the presence of Eric and my feeling that this was an area that should be developed.

It never quite worked out. Cary and Oleg never got on. Islamic art, although Oleg was interested in it, it was miniatures and so forth and so on. Nonetheless, we taught it, and it was productive. That was something that you didn't expect that you picked up, and that has, to an extent, worked out. It is potentially available. If Cary retires, somebody else will come along, and there it is. It's like the Pre-Raphaelites, which are being used by Henri Zerner or someone. *[I am extremely proud of what I did to build up the Fogg's collection of Islamic art, of the teaching that was done in this field, of the potential that exists here for the future. This is the one area which I developed with no encouragement or discouragement from someone in the Harvard payroll.]

Now, you asked me about Agnes Mongan. Agnes went to Bryn Mawr [College]. She wanted to get a Ph.D., and this proved to be complicated. Her father was a leading doctor in Somerville [Massachusetts]. When he went from the Harvard Medical School, Somerville was a promising

* Dr. Coolidge added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.



place, and then never fulfilled its promise and became a lower-class suburb. He had a perfectly good hospital, he had a perfectly good practice, but one doesn't come from Somerville, so to speak. It was always an embarrassment to Agnes that, though her background really was correct--Irish but good Anglo-Saxon. She had a Presbyterian minister for a grandfather. She belongs where she now is, but she had to overcome the fact of that Irish marriage and growing up in a second-rate suburb of Boston.

She worked for a Ph.D., and I am confused because it's a complicated story. I think it involves both Radcliffe [College] and Smith [College], and Bryn Mawr didn't give Ph.D.'s then. I don't know whether it does now, but it didn't then. Maybe she went to Smith and came to Bryn Mawr to get her Ph.D., because Smith may not have been giving them. Radcliffe wouldn't give her credit for her work at Smith, or something like that. Anyway, she did graduate work and did not get a Ph.D. She was involved with both Radcliffe and Smith.

She then came in, I guess initially in 1927, as Sachs's secretary, and then became his curatorial assistant, worked with him in the forming of his collection, and when I came aboard was assistant curator of drawings. Paul Sachs was curator of drawings; that



was his title in addition to associate director. Paul [H.] Buck said, "What do you think of her?" At the time the only way I knew Agnes was she helped me on that drawing show that I did for my architectural course, and I said, "I think she's splendid." We agreed, therefore, to appoint her curator, by implication with tenure; then after a number of years, associate director.

We're very close friends. We're not the most intimate friends, because she's very Catholic. I tend to be anti-Catholic. Our personalities don't fit in certain ways. It never produced hostility, but put it this way: there are almost no tastes that we have in common. Color turns me on, black and white doesn't. I can appreciate drawings, I enjoy the few I own, but they don't get me really excited. The situation was inherently difficult in that here I didn't know beans, I didn't know anything about running a museum, and she had been working here for the better part of twenty years. She came in '27, and this was '47. She had, by then, a worldwide reputation as a drawing scholar and a museum person, and why wasn't she made director? Well, she wasn't. I don't know why-- I didn't and don't think about it.

SMITH: In 1947 to '48, is it even possible that a woman would have been considered for director of a Harvard museum? Or any museum, for that matter?



COOLIDGE: No. Only one person made it then for another museum, and that's Mrs. [Adelyn D.] Breeskin in Baltimore.

SMITH: At the Walters [Art Gallery]?

COOLIDGE: No, at the Baltimore Museum [of Art]. And, you know, there's a city museum, and Adelyn Breeskin was director then. She was a major curator, I forget where. I can't remember when she was promoted, but it was, if not then-- It was not '47. It was '55. It was nearly that time. But Harvard was not coeducational, and it would have taken daring. It was conceivable, but there was no Harvard woman professor. There was one quasi-professor, who was an astronomer--or astronomess, I don't know what the feminine is--who was so distinguished that she was paid and behaved as a professor, but they invented a non-professorial title for her. [laughter] I forget her name.

Agnes was a member of the Harvard group who were ten years older than I, the modern art group. She didn't happen to be interested in modern art. But that group in the art world certainly would have thought she was a logical person. It is enormously wonderful that we had never the slightest problem. Disappointment, yes. Jealousy in a practical sense, no. I would almost put it this way: she was certainly deeply disappointed, but



there was never the jealousy in the sense of translating itself into a hostility to me personally. She and Charles Kuhn taught me about museum work.

SMITH: I was going to say that I understand in 1960 she nearly left because she received an offer from another institution.

COOLIDGE: Yes, and I said then, "Do you want to go? Would you rather stay here?" We met whatever the salary offer was. I think by then she was associate director. If not, she was promoted then or thereafter. She said, "No, I would rather stay in Cambridge." She remained number two, but she had everything else. Well, the other thing, it wouldn't have had the teaching contact that she had. I think it was a college museum; therefore she wouldn't have had graduate students. She didn't do much with undergraduates, she did some. In any case, there were losses. She's an at-home person, and she was deeply at home here, and in Rockport in the summers, weekends, and that kind of thing. She didn't really look forward to moving, and stayed.



TAPE NUMBER: X, SIDE ONE

APRIL 12, 1991

SMITH: When we left off yesterday afternoon, you mentioned that you needed to talk about Charles Kuhn and Fred [Frederick] Deknatel and the-- I think the phrase that you used was the "splitting of the old guard." So perhaps we could resume there.

COOLIDGE: Shall I begin on Deknatel and Kuhn?

SMITH: Yes, why don't you.

COOLIDGE: Deknatel was chairman, and, as I said, the offices were next door. He was in his mid-forties sort of thing. I don't know how to say this, but he was medically unable to wear a uniform, so he was at Harvard [University] during the war and was very successful in the college administration. I don't know that he was dean of students, but he was that kind of person. The result of this was that he knew Harvard inside out. I had come back, and, after all, it was thirteen years different and under a very active president. It was wonderful to have him there, just telling you who was doing things and how you could push things. A very sympathetic guy. Both of them. And interested in contemporary art. I knew [Michael] Fried more intimately than Fred Deknatel did, but Fred Deknatel knew the kind



of art that Fried was interested in, the work of artists of his own generation, literally his own generation of people, who were in their forties. And he had a very discriminating eye about it. In a way, I didn't, and as I got involved in these things, and as one was purchasing them, I'd talk it over with Fred, who had a thoroughly sympathetic eye. Above all, though not intellectually particularly creative, he was not in the least conservative. He was never thinking of this in contrast to the past, so that he was always fully abreast of anything that was going on, and he prided himself in that. Money, a certain amount of money, which took them to Paris a great deal, and there they'd go to the latest theater, and so forth and so on.

SMITH: You mentioned that he was an art collector. What were his preferences in terms of the art that he bought?

COOLIDGE: When he was young, they couldn't afford anything but Picasso prints. Then they proceeded from there, certainly with Picasso. It's a little difficult for me to discriminate, because his wife has gone on collecting. With the tastes they had in common, she has gone into people much younger, the British sculptor whose name I've forgotten--

SMITH: Henry Moore?

COOLIDGE: No, no, much more recent than that. An



abstract British sculptor, well known, I suppose a man of fifty now. But Fred also had interest in French nineteenth century and would do odd things. He was the only person I ever knew who found Delacroix's oil sketches stimulating, so he would buy one of those. He had a perfectly beautiful Vuillard, which he traded in, and it has ended up in the [Duncan] Phillips Collection. That paid for a marvelous Cézanne oil sketch. He was that kind of mind. He was alert over the whole of art over the last twenty years, avoiding the whole impressionist bit, but taking early things and then getting up to pretty much the latest.

SMITH: So starting, to resume, with the post-impressionists, the Nabis and--

COOLIDGE: Yes, but even more than that. Starting, I would say, with early Picasso and that kind of thing. And a very nice Klee. A collection that was small in a house approximately the size of this, and all over the house there would be nice things. It was a completely unpretentious collection. You'd move into a room and there would be, oh, that size example of a major artist, not overwhelming but astonishing. Fresh and always very good quality.

We came to know an extraordinary man named G. David Thompson, who was a major collector of contemporary art



and one of the two or three, in an absolute sense, most remarkable collectors I've ever known. Partly because his method was so different. He would go to a show, a first show of an artist, and buy twelve to eighteen of the works if he liked the man. Then he lived with them, and he would pare it down to three or four and would use the ones that he rejected to trade for other works of the period or give them away. He gave us-- I won't go into Dave's social issues--marvelous and odd. Alfred Barr said of him, "I've never found a modern painter, contemporary painter, that Dave didn't already know." It was that kind of thing, and thoroughly international about it. Well, Dave Thompson always consulted Fred. Very much was his own collector, but he liked to know what other people thought. He didn't depend on them for advice. It was simply seeing where his work stood with the people who were interested in contemporary art. He would certainly go to Alfred Barr in the same way.

This was Fred's freshness. A very solid teacher, not in the least a spectacular lecturer, but an interesting mind, and again would have been probably the one that, say, Michael Fried would say he remembered best. He had the kind of mind that was critically receptive to any idea, a wholly new approach to any artist. He would start out cold and see if this made



sense, and if it was radically new he would note this fact. He was unprejudiced in the most splendid way. Died, oh, twenty years ago. He was just retired. Premature death.

What was going on I think in the thirties was acute disagreement within the department. The younger men that they appointed were the least controversial. I mean, they would be apt to be somebody who was not Professor X's favorite pupil. It was one that he liked. Neither would it be Professor Y's most hated pupil, so to speak. So that you've got in Fred's generation somewhat negative people. Ben [Benjamin] Rowland was anything but negative, but wholly disengaged. Charles Kuhn was the same kind of apparently negative person. When George Hanfmann and I started bringing in wholly different kind of people from what they themselves were-- Fred was every inch a Princeton [University] man. Came up to the Harvard Law School, then changed into fine arts. His family was in manufacturing, and he was the Christian gentleman, if you wish. But they didn't in the least mind when my generation had positive feelings that Harvard was all too much into Christian gentlemen, and let's get a Jewish boy from the Bronx who's NYU [New York University] trained. George Hanfmann was doing the same thing in the classical field.



Charles Kuhn was extraordinary. Very good looking. He came from Cincinnati. He was descended from the senior branch of the Kuhn family, who were Jews that had come over to this country I think in 1848, that kind of thing. His grandfather was the head of a family bank there, and after the Civil War, the grandfather's younger brothers said, "We think since this is through, we're moving to New York." And grandfather said, "Boys, I know you well. You'll lose your shirts." But they instead founded Kuhn, Loeb, and Company. So Charles too had money. Not enormously rich, but comfortably rich and could travel and could collect, but was very much a younger branch of the haute-juiverie. He wasn't that himself at all. Oh, Mrs. Strauss was a cousin, a first cousin of his. They all knew him. In 1930, possibly at the age of thirty, about that young, he was put in charge of the Busch-Reisinger Museum when Kuno Francke died. Kuno Francke had built up the Busch-Reisinger Museum to teach Americans about German culture, and his idea was to get plaster casts of the great classic monuments of German art. There was a full-scale plaster cast of the colossal, twice-life-size equestrian statue of Frederick I, the kind of 1610 thing that was on the bridge in Berlin--it was destroyed in the war. Well, this was there, and you have a Romanesque cathedral portal at full



length and height in the main hall.

SMITH: But not original.

COOLIDGE: No, it's a plaster cast. When Charles Kuhn took over the museum, there were two originals. One was a tapestry, which was so inferior that the only time that he used it was at banquets to hide the caterer. He preferred to hide the caterer with the dating from the tapestry than with the tapestry itself. The other original was a portrait of the kaiser dating from the founding of the museum. Kuhn started in the thirties to build easily the best collection of twentieth-century German art, expressionist paintings, in this country, and perhaps the best outside of Germany. Marvelous collection of that. When I came in, he was continuing to do that. I encouraged him to buy other German art particularly, because it was cheap and I loved it. German baroque art.

Charles Kuhn was a splendid museum man. He worked, it seemed like, eighteen hours a day. The museum had no funds, so he would make the pedestals. He did everything himself. But they had a little money for acquisitions. If I saw a wonderful German baroque thing, I would buy it for the Fogg [Art Museum], and then he would assemble the funds and buy it from the Fogg at cost for the Busch-Reisinger Museum, so that their collection expanded into



Renaissance and baroque and a little way with this kind of backing. And a New York girl, again, wealthy banking family, father we'll say a banker-- A client of her father's, a mature man, past even elderly, fell in love with her and presented her with a sum of money in the early, middle six figures. Father, who was wealthy himself and indeed a very distinguished man, said, "You can't possibly keep that." So she, having worked closely with Charles Kuhn, gave the whole sum to the Busch-Reisinger Museum to buy works of art. At the very end of Charles's life, there was \$10,000 to \$15,000 unspent capital. There was money in five figures that he could buy with. He used that to buy a perfectly marvelous late Gothic, fully polychromed Madonna and child. He was tending to replace the plaster casts with the whole range of German sculpture. He left a very good collection of German art, spotty, but with an outstanding collection of German expressionist art.

He succeeded Fred Deknatel as chairman. Kuhn was infinitely knowledgeable, though he was simplistic about museum work. I'd turn to him rather than Agnes. I would turn to both on major things. Agnes and I had completely different tastes and a sort of tendency automatically to dislike the other person's suggestion and then very often come around to it. Each would supply the other



frequently, and I'd say, "Gee, that's a good idea," and then she'd like it too. Whereas Charles Kuhn was completely open, not strongly directed, so that he was just a much more flexible person.

Plus the fact, of course, that he was a male and-- Okay, one of our guards was an active homosexual, and this was reported by a student to us. The student claimed that, so to say, he had been harassed by the guard. He wasn't raped, but how do you handle that? Well this, of course, is the kind of thing that I could talk over with Charles Kuhn. Agnes is a passionate Catholic; it would have been difficult to talk it over with her. We could talk over anything with each other. It was very gentle and would go no further, and you knew it would go no further.

A conscientious scholar, ending up writing good catalogs of what he had acquired for the museum. Fred wrote practically nothing. Charles Kuhn wrote things that were pedestrian in the sense that a catalog of an existing collection is pedestrian, but also very useful. His first book was on German art in America [A Catalogue of German Paintings of the Middle Ages and Renaissance in American Collections], and this went all the way back to, I believe, the fifteenth century in American private collections. This was a terribly useful thing to have.



You vaguely remember that the Percy Loeb had a German primitive, and this was the book you could go to and find out what it was.

Fred had started out in medieval art under [Arthur] Kingsley Porter, and in fact was Kingsley Porter's--I think I told you--last assistant and therefore corrected my paper. He left medieval art, but was the person that the department would turn to for initial advice on it.

SMITH: Now, a major part of transforming the department was recruitment. We've talked a little bit about Sidney [J.] Freedberg and Oleg Grabar and your role in those two recruitments. I've been told by a couple of people that Oleg Grabar was very important in terms of pushing change within the department, a more disciplined, scientific approach. Would you agree with that?

COOLIDGE: Yes and no. As you can see from reading Oleg Grabar, he's top brilliant. An interest in problems, but no interest in solving them. Thus a little book, a nice book, on the Alhambra [The Alhambra]. Not many scholars can handle Arabic who are interested in a European monument. It's something that's a complicated monument. You end with a question, "Well, what was it for?" Oleg ends with, "It could serve this purpose or that purpose or the other purpose," but without coming to a conclusion on this kind of thing. Oleg was full of ideas about what



the department might do. Some of which were carried through, I can't remember which. Others of which were dropped and weren't heard of again. He lacked, ultimately, direction. He was critically productive, but much less creative, because he felt an obligation to discover and describe every alternative, but no compulsion to decide among them.

SMITH: Two other important appointments were Seymour Slive and James [S.] Ackerman. Were you involved in their recruitment?

COOLIDGE: Indeed. The chairman of the fine arts department always went to the meetings of the College Art Association [of America]. I went every year as director of the Fogg for twenty years, and that was quite enough. But once Fred got me in the middle of a talk and said, "Come quick, there's a marvelous guy lecturing." I went with him, and the marvelous guy was Seymour Slive. Fred spotted him, we brought him on, and then he was obviously terrific. He gave up a position at Pomona [College], or that group, with tenure in order to come here as an assistant professor, but above all to work with Jakob Rosenberg. They became very close friends, and Rosenberg really taught him something. You know, they wrote the Pelican book on Dutch painting together [Dutch Art and Architecture]. In fact it's virtually all Slive, with



Rosenberg modifying, perhaps rephrasing, things that Slive had written. Sure. He was obviously terrific, a pupil of [Ulrich] Middeldorf and therefore in the German tradition, if you wish. But also clearly, from the start, very much himself. This was the kind of guy, a rare kind of guy, that everybody at once agreed on.

Freedberg was a close friend, had been as an undergraduate, a pupil of Fred Deknatel's. He was at Wellesley [College] and was known to the most conservative people here. When Harry Bober had finished his five years, there was a question of up or out, and it was clearly out. Freedberg, who was exactly his age, my age--Freedberg was a year younger than I am--was the obvious choice, and simply because like Slive, but in his own way, the tops.

SMITH: I understand that Slive took over the running of the section people at a certain point and made some important changes in how the sections were--

COOLIDGE: This would have been the big introductory course. I won't put my hand in the fire on this, but about then they started having the section meetings in the galleries. I wish I had taught--I didn't think of it. It came in from somebody else in the department. I taught the introductory course for seven years, and then I wanted to get out. Everybody agreed that seven years



was enough. [Wilhelm] Koehler had it alone for a year. Everything was tried, and certainly Slive was a major part of it. He may have been the person who did that. The important thing was that it was introduced about that time, and it is perfectly conceivable that he introduced it. He has continued to do shows. The "Rembrandt and His Pupils" show that is there now is for Slive's course.

SMITH: Were you involved in the recruitment of [James S.] Ackerman?

COOLIDGE: Oh, yes. We were graduate students together. Also-- Well, put it this way. I'd written on Vignola and he'd written on Palladio, so we knew one another as scholars. When I took over the Fogg Museum, I felt very strongly that the museum course should be continued.

Rosenberg and Kuhn, though they'd taught it one or two years, weren't interested, so I took over that. But it meant that I did not teach any architectural history. We were therefore looking for an architectural historian to replace me, in a sense, and Jim Ackerman was clearly the person to take it. I can't remember any discussion.

SMITH: One of the things that happens in the postwar period-- I think it's a general national trend, but it's perhaps particularly clear at Harvard, and perhaps Harvard's in the lead on this. In the interwar period there was a strong national interest in the medieval. In



the postwar period there seems to be shift to Italian Renaissance and Netherlandish. I think if one looks at the development of the Harvard fine arts faculty, there is also that kind of shift, that Harvard becomes one of the leading centers, if not the leading center, for the study of Italian Renaissance and Netherlandish work. Do you have any explanations for why such a shift would take place, a local explanation, or any thoughts on the broader kinds of implications?

COOLIDGE: The broader thing is that for years, ever since the death of Koehler-- As Koehler was getting older and one knew he was going to retire-- I mean, this was one of the reasons we went to Bober. He was a promising young medievalist. We would have taken any promising young medievalist. We agreed on Willibald Sauerländer, but he was not going to stay in America, quite reasonably. So we could never find a medievalist who was of the quality that we were looking for. Period. We feel no regret that we didn't get Jean Bony or any of the other medievalists. Again, that marvelous Pole that we were talking about--

SMITH: [Louis] Grodecki.

COOLIDGE: Okay, Grodecki. But this would have been pretty complicated. He knew nothing about America, and he would be coming in at a fairly senior level. We tried



and tried and tried, and there wasn't anybody. I still can't think of anybody that we should have gotten. The Renaissance thing was, of course, built around [Chandler] Post. As Post approached retirement, Freedberg fitted into that. Ackerman happened to be a Renaissance architectural historian, but he could be brought in as the best architectural historian of his generation. One is facing here the change of taste within the field. Instead of Ackerman, you might have had [Wolfgang] Lotz, for instance. I was in Renaissance architecture, or had been, and would have stayed there if I hadn't taken on the Fogg. Mine would have been modern, probably, but in any case, you had a lot of people who were interested, and good people. One could go beyond this, and [Michael] Baxandall, so forth. You just didn't have that situation in the Middle Ages. Naturally, when you were looking for a new appointment and there was one of the best people, or the best person, of his generation who was there, you took him. If it happened to be Renaissance, then you were rich in the Renaissance and bankrupt in medieval. That is the fundamental reason.

The reason for the change in taste, for the exhaustion of a field of scholarship, I don't know, and I think it would be hard to answer. There one would have to look at other areas or occasions in which it had

happened. Actually, at the moment, I think mannerism is dead. People are going to Renaissance, going back to the fifteenth century rather than the sixteenth, and I'm not sure the whole of the Renaissance is not wearing out, being replaced by the baroque.

SMITH: I suppose there's two aspects to it. Research leads to new questions, and perhaps as research in mannerism exhausts itself, it demands research into the quattrocento, to--

COOLIDGE: That's right.

SMITH: But then there's the whole phasing out of one field of study and the phasing in of another study, which seems to me has more to do with taste and culture in the bigger sense than in research questions.

COOLIDGE: That's right. I agree entirely.

SMITH: I understand another big marker in the transformation of the Harvard department was the development of dissertations on modern topics. This may be folklore, and in a sense may need to be corrected, but I have been told, again by several people who were students in the department in the fifties, that there was a relatively big controversy over Frank Trapp's desire to do a dissertation on Matisse, that this was resisted by several members of the faculty as not a proper subject, because-- I think Matisse may have still been alive at



the time. In any event, the work was too recent to be studied properly historically. Do you have any recollection of that?

COOLIDGE: I don't recollect this at all, but what I do recollect--and we found this idiotic but harmless--is that in his fifties and with his fantastic international reputation, Alfred Barr applied for his Ph.D. His thesis was his book on Matisse [Matisse: His Art and His Public]. So that on the whole, sure, you always had, and should have, fringe groups in the department who could feel strongly about things. I don't remember this and I'm surprised, because I would have been aware if this was a really widespread thing. I know it would not have stopped Fred Deknatel. He would have been the person who would have carried most weight, because he had been chairman. He was enormously widely respected and wise, and he wouldn't just have said that. Unless Deknatel had reservations about Frank Trapp, which I don't think he did.

SMITH: Well, as I said, it may be more a folkloric kind of information that gets passed along. What I'd like to ask you now is if you could compare the Harvard approach or method to what existed at several other prominent schools, for instance Yale [University] or NYU [New York University] or Princeton or [University of California]



Berkeley. Fifties, sixties.

COOLIDGE: Berkeley, I don't know. The thing that's most prominent to me at Berkeley is that Jim Ackerman left his native town, to which he returned, to come to us. For somebody whose specialty is the Renaissance, they're both equidistant from the originals that you are studying. He preferred the Harvard situation to the Berkeley situation. He told me one reason why he left Berkeley to come to Harvard and liked Harvard better than Berkeley. Simply, he said, "Berkeley is run predominantly by the faculty. You cannot imagine how many faculty committees there are on any problem, which is then recommended to the dean. And it is wonderful to come to Harvard, which is run by the dean, and you do not have to serve--" On some faculty committees, of course, but there was nothing like the amount of committee work that one was involved in in Berkeley. That was his statement, and I can believe this is true. It had a ring, a complete ring of truth.

SMITH: That sounds like a familiar complaint to me.

COOLIDGE: So Berkeley is out.

SMITH: Let's talk about Yale, NYU, and Princeton, which perhaps with Harvard are the leading programs.

COOLIDGE: Princeton remained, and I think alas, because I know-- And I'm not up to date. I was on the visiting



committee there for a while. Of course it was always interesting, having lived there for four years. I loved the people who were there. My generation who were teaching there I'd known as graduate students there, Craig [Hugh] Smyth, so forth and so on. It never got beyond the New Humanism, and it lost the cultural depth that a person like [Charles Rufus] Morey had. Morey could really bring Plato or Stoicism into any discussion, having really read them in a way that the current Princeton crowd, or the Princeton crowd I knew coming up, couldn't. You approved of bringing in those questions, but you just didn't have the fundamental knowledge.

Princeton University is Princeton in every sense. It is a delightful place, and perhaps places too high a premium on is he a nice guy, what is his wife like, would the couple be an addition to the community--this kind of thing. I don't think that-- They would deny absolutely this, but from outside observation, it is what happens. I was asked about one appointment that they were planning to make, asked I think by the dean. I guess I may have been on the visiting committee then. This was a young man who'd taken his Ph.D. here. [The dean asked] if I knew him well. I replied to the dean that there was nothing against him, that he'd do well. He wasn't outstanding, but he was perfectly good enough to do this,



by all means. But the Princeton department was like a martini in which you had five parts vermouth and one part gin, and you were adding another part of vermouth. This has been the problem there. There were never people, or if there were--and Bobby [Robert] Rosenblum was an example of somebody with a burning passion and real drive and originality who taught at Princeton--they left and went somewhere else. Jim Holderbaum was another case. A remarkable man who left and went to Smith [College]. Still, they are all eminently nice gentlemen, and you wouldn't have a moment's qualm in inviting them to dinner under any circumstances. I'm not sure that that is the kind of department you want to have--somebody who you wouldn't want to dinner perhaps. That's a broad statement, but this is--

Oh, hell, when I was on the visiting committee, the Princeton general exam remained encyclopedic, the way the Harvard exam had been in the thirties. Before I came here in '45, they rewrote the whole general exam concept. It had been literally encyclopedic. You could be asked questions about any field and were expected to know that. Well, we had a meeting of the visiting committee. And one of the things that I strongly believe in on visiting committees--and if it doesn't happen, you can generally get it to happen--is that the committee meets with a

group of students without the faculty. The group of students said, "Princeton is still giving the encyclopedic exams, which means that you really don't concentrate in any area while you're here. You can't. You've got to spread yourself." So then you had the final meeting with the faculty, and we said, "How about the general exam?" And then they told us. We said, "Is this the way it used to be?" They said, "Yes, this hasn't changed." We said, "We criticized this inherently ourselves, and we've heard from some of your students that they criticized this. Would you consider changing it?" Well, they didn't change it. The Princeton way was the right way. Again, Wen Fong was outside that, but there was too much of that. So it's never been an exciting place since Morey died.

SMITH: How would you compare the Harvard and Yale approaches to art history scholarship?

COOLIDGE: I have never known Yale. We always--and it's a curious reality--disparaged Yale. I think Yale results are astonishing. I think Yale is doing a grand job. How they are doing that grand job, I can't tell you. I mean the fact that, as I mentioned, they have produced this whole run of medievalists, which nobody else had done-- Charles Seymour [Jr.] and Sumner [Crosby] and so forth. They seem to be training terribly good people. A person



like George [Heard] Hamilton was very fresh in his attitude towards the museum, and in collecting himself. He was a very fresh person. I suppose I could say of Yale, they seem the least ideological of departments. The results are excellent. Everybody admires George [A.] Kubler, but I don't sense a Kubler school. He's just like [Erwin] Panofsky, a very exciting person teaching. SMITH: Do you find The Shape of Time to be a useful book?

COOLIDGE: I've never read it. I'm not particularly interested in that aspect, or I no longer am. As a kid, as a graduate student, I was, but I've gotten out of that. So this is a weakness of mine. I just have never had the intention, and I just have never gotten down to doing it.



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COOLIDGE: George is inspiring, but not the influence that clearly [Henri] Focillon was. You can have that kind of professor, as Panofsky was. As regards NYU, which I know much better, partly because-- Well, I've kept up with it, I'm interested in it, and also people like Donald Posner and Kathy [Kathleen Brandt] Weil-Garris worked here, so we know the individuals teaching there. For a while, I mean, like Harry Bober, they were graduate students with me. There the differences are between the intellectual approach and the connoisseurship approach. This is a gross oversimplification, but it is where you would start.

SMITH: But when you came to Harvard, did you not plan to subvert the connoisseurship approach in some way?

COOLIDGE: Yes, but after a year I was running a museum, and (a) I could affect appointments, but I could no longer affect the approach of the department; and (b) I was partly involved in connoisseurship. One of the reasons that when I retired I taught American architecture was because I just don't think you can learn architecture from slides and photographs. You can only look at originals. This was sort of basic. I did teach

other things, but it was a way to teach people about architecture that I wouldn't have felt before I got involved in the museum.

My instinct certainly would have been to subvert the Harvard approach in terms of patronage and sociology, rather than in terms of iconography, which is not my field, although I respect it enormously. But I tend to start with the social situation in studying the building. One of the articles that I think is one of the best things I did was "Hingham Builds a Meetinghouse," which was a study of literally what happened to a group of Englishmen who arrived here in the 1630s and then in the 1670s were rebuilding their meetinghouse. What was the society like, and how did that affect the building? That would have been the work. In that way, very close to George Hanfmann, who also saw art history in terms of general history and society.

SMITH: Perhaps we should talk some about your teaching while you were on the Harvard faculty. We've discussed the survey course, the museum course. I understand you taught the high Italian Renaissance course jointly with Sidney Freedberg.

COOLIDGE: That was because I had done at NYU quite a bit of work on the high Italian Renaissance, and particularly on sculpture, which I'm more comfortable with than with



painting. Terrific as he is, there were things I could add partly from, shall we say, hearing Panofsky on these people, and partly from my own work in areas that he hadn't worked in. That was great fun.

SMITH: When you were at the museum, how many courses would you teach?

COOLIDGE: I taught one full one a year, and that was the museum course. Certainly before I was here, I had a seminar, and on fairly rare occasions I would teach other things. I taught a course on Florentine fifteenth century with a young German scholar who was here for a while. I did mostly the sculpture, and he did mostly the painting. But it was a joint course, and it doesn't mean I didn't give a lecture or two on painting.

SMITH: Was that [Peter von] Blankenhagen?

COOLIDGE: No. That was rare, because the museum course, although it had no overt intellectual content, was enormously time-consuming, and properly so. So I just gave up on lecture teaching.

SMITH: But you continued graduate seminars from time to time?

COOLIDGE: Graduate seminars, but shall I say in twenty years, perhaps one would express it as one or two. I taught four, but not-- It was fairly rarely that I taught graduate seminars.



SMITH: How many dissertations did you direct while you were at the Fogg?

COOLIDGE: That I kept up, and could claim twenty-- I think there probably are ten. One remembers the good ones. I mean, Kathy Weil-Garris's dissertation. I'd have to look, but I think Hank [Henry A.] Millon must have fit it in there. Also Irving Lavin. At least half a dozen, but on the whole good ones. They weren't good because I made them so. They were good because the students wanted something that was different from the regular, and I was available at this level.

SMITH: I see. Actually, I had one more question about when you were at the Fogg. I understand that the students felt that an important part of the Harvard experience was that they could easily approach you to suggest exhibitions, not simply the museum course, but graduate students.

COOLIDGE: Absolutely. I mean, that would have been one of my highest ambitions. I've never heard that said that I achieved that, and I'm very happy if that was true. Certainly, I can remember various exhibitions that they approached me on. This is good and proper, desirable, and I'm awfully glad that they thought I did it.

SMITH: Then in 1968 you left the museum. I think you've explained why you left the museum. You became the

William Dorr Boardman Professor--

COOLIDGE: William Dorr Boardman Professor sometime along then. I don't remember when.

SMITH: Which is an endowed chair.

COOLIDGE: It's the senior endowed chair in the department. Now there are several.

SMITH: Not specifically for architectural history, but for any aspect of art history.

COOLIDGE: Yes, though I wanted to get back to architectural history. One of the things that happened in the intervening time was that I didn't publish anything on architecture that I can remember, though I published quite a little on, for instance, Fogg acquisitions, and I did an article in the Gazette des Beaux Arts on the Rubens tapestries, things like that. I wanted to learn to publish in fields other than architecture, but when I was getting back full-time, then I wanted to develop a specialty in architecture. So that I don't think I've published anything except on architecture since.

SMITH: As you became Boardman Professor, what types of classes did you decide you wanted to offer?

COOLIDGE: Two general directions. One was, for the reasons I mentioned, American architecture and local architecture, which you would handle any way you could in a course that heavily emphasizes [H. H.] Richardson, or a



course on communities within the metropolis, and so forth and so on. There were different kinds of subjects you could do which weren't repetitious in themselves. Then a general course on the rise of the modern metropolis, which was a history of how people lived. Well, it was just what the title suggests: it's how, starting with L'Enfant's Washington and Alexander I's Leningrad, which-- I treat Leningrad as, so to say-- It was what Washington would have been if the founding fathers and their immediate successors had filled in L'Enfant's plan as they built. You get up to Chandrighar and the chaos of greater Boston if you want. There was an early section which was on the impact of the industrial revolution on London docks, railroad stations, that kind of thing. Then the suburb, starting with Bedford Park and getting over to Riverside and then ending maybe with Oak Park and then the Chicago skyscraper and downtown, and of course, as I said in the end, [Walter] Gropius, that sort of thing.

SMITH: Were these undergraduate lecture courses?

COOLIDGE: They were undergraduate. This was an undergraduate lecture course.

SMITH: Maybe we could talk somewhat about the changes in the student body--

COOLIDGE: May I say one thing here on teaching? On the



connoisseurship aspect. Very late on I stumbled on a technique that would that I had thought of earlier. The Fogg owns a Land camera. It was a course just on sculpture, a seminar on sculpture for undergraduates. Part of this was-- We went to the Fogg basement with the students, and we picked out two--I think one of them was a Rodin, maybe both of them were Rodins--good statues not on exhibition. We put them up on--I mean so big [about a yard]--pedestals in my office. I brought in extra lamps and bought for each student a packet of land camera film, eight to ten shots, and their assignment was to photograph this work of art. I've since used it at Smith; I used it on architecture.

SMITH: How would you evaluate the photographs? What would be the criteria you would use in terms of that assignment?

COOLIDGE: Sculpture was the first time, and I don't remember. I didn't think it through that way. I really wanted to see if it was productive, and indeed it was. One thing came up, wholly unexpected. In my office there's a door coming in and-- Here, here, so coming in this way you'd never see it. Here are a series of pegs to hang coats on and coat hangers, metal coat hangers. You take your coat off and hang it up there. One of the statues that the kids picked was Rodin's Saint John the



Baptist, and Saint John the Baptist has his finger up like that. An Egyptian girl, who was an undergraduate who was taking the course, did nine serious photographs, and the last pretended that Saint John the Baptist was carrying the coat hanger. The kids were so mad that this complicated student had the wit to think of making a funny photograph. That never crossed their mind. They were worried about light and "Do we do the back?" All the things they should have been worried about.

When I did it for architecture, I did assign things. This was at Smith. I worked out a list of buildings of which they could choose one. If they didn't like that, they would come to me, and we could see why. I chose a list rather than saying, "Take any building you like." Then I assigned them half a dozen photographs: One was a photograph which most closely resembles the drawing that the architect presented to the board of trustees in order to get this commission. What was the architect's view of it? Assume that a tragedy happened, a bomb or something, and this building was virtually, but not wholly destroyed, and that Smith resolved to rebuild it just the way it had been. What photograph can you take of the building that would be the most useful for the architects? The problem is to rebuild that, and obviously it would be unlikely that it would be the other one. Then,



because you wanted the range of things, not just modern material, you by and large picked revival buildings. I said a photograph which most closely resembles the model from which it was-- I mean, a Greek revival house, which one looks most like a temple? And then the balancing thing, a photograph which though Greek revival, shows it's perfectly clearly a nineteenth-century structure. Well, one could go on along that line, but you were using these questions. You could take the detail. [Last] just wow me, wow us with a photograph.

I just had a feeling that this was getting kids looking and at the same time creating. That it was, if you wish, back to what Arthur Pope was doing when he made us copy these drawings in pencil. We were copying an original; they were interpreting an original. I wish desperately that I had thought of that earlier, because it did seem a lively thing to do.

SMITH: You had mentioned earlier, off tape, that you also used the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in your teaching.

COOLIDGE: I had discovered that a lot of undergraduates were interested in museum work. Paul [J.] Sachs took one undergraduate once, and he ended up as director of the Metropolitan [Museum of Art]. It was Jim [James J.]



Rorimer. That way was not practical because, particularly if you traveled so much, how do you hold the numbers down? There are enough graduate students doing it so that it worked. I couldn't do it.

But there was a gift given to the Boston Museum which was to enable the curators to teach. This enabled the curators to teach in any local institution. In other words, if they spent a quarter of their time teaching, the income from the gift would reimburse the museum for a quarter of their salary. That kind of thing. I can't remember how I used this, but this became the basis of an undergraduate course in museum training. Not unlike the one I gave to graduate students, but with this difference: it was open to students from Harvard, from MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology], from Wellesley [College], from Brandeis [University]. I think I initially limited it to six institutions. I think if I'd stayed with it, I would have expanded it. This was fantastically educative to them. The Harvard kids came in there with their snobbish intellectualism, or "Well, you know, all these lesser people are really at trade school of one sort or another or else they are girls at Wellesley." All this kind of thing. Find them in a course that was just a course in museum work, and the other kids doing it better, or differently, that was



marvelous. One might apply it to other kinds of things, because it was not significantly diluting my teaching time from Harvard. Perhaps a third of the students were Harvard anyway.

I was anxious, or became anxious, to break up the traditional teaching procedures. One of the concepts I never was able to carry out. It was to give a seminar lasting half a semester. It would seem to me it would be valuable to have a half seminar devoted entirely to Vermeer. I don't think he's varied enough to carry a whole seminar, but he certainly can swing half of one. I had a feeling that if you got the right colleague, he could produce a half seminar on Rodin, or something else, an iconographical subject. You could take, well, representations of the Last Judgment for the second half of your half seminar. That kind of thing is what I wanted to get into.

SMITH: Let's talk a little bit about the changing nature of the Harvard student body. Perhaps it didn't change all that much, but I'm curious about that. When you came back to Harvard in '47, you were still dealing with the GI Bill generation.

COOLIDGE: Yes.

SMITH: Presumably these were older students.

COOLIDGE: Yes.



SMITH: Many of them had been in combat. Did they have a different attitude than the students from the prewar period?

COOLIDGE: Oh, yes, sure. They were much less impressed with you, to begin with. They'd had officers your age, and, you know, there was much less deference. Again, the shock of coming to Harvard was that you lacked the variety that NYU had had, and for this brief period, you got a little bit of that. Then, after about two or three years, you were back at par. And par just was a very different group of human beings. For example, I mentioned in connection with NYU the initiative that the students had, to the degree of starting their own magazine. That would be impossible at Harvard. The students just didn't have that cohesion or that degree of initiative.

SMITH: A couple of students from that period would have been Irving Lavin and Bambridge Bunting. Did you work with them on their dissertations?

COOLIDGE: Bam, no. He was working with Leonard Opdycke. It was almost finished. No, regretfully. He did a marvelous job. Irving Lavin, yes indeed, entirely, and this was one of the students I'm proud of having worked with. I don't know quite what to say, because, of course, again one made it possible, and it worked for



him, to get to know [Rudolf] Wittkower. Because I knew Wittkower reasonably well. When he was going to London, well, you could give him a letter to Wittkower, and this worked. Another person who was, again, a closer friend was Ernst Kitzinger, and of course Lavin worked with Kitzinger. It isn't that he couldn't have worked with Kitzinger without me, but this at least gave me the feeling that I was helping. I followed what he was doing to an extent with Kitzinger.

SMITH: In the fifties and sixties, was there an expansion in the student body, both on the undergraduate level and on the graduate level?

COOLIDGE: The undergraduate level varied from year to year extraordinarily, depending on survey courses. The graduate level varied too. No, wait a minute. The other thing that was more stable was the level of the number of undergraduates who were majoring in the field. And this would go from 90 to 110, as it were, but without any regular progression. It was, at the end of thirty years, still within that level, and, you know, a younger person coming to the department would say, "Well, year before last was 90, last year was 100, now it's 110." This didn't impress me, because it had been both 90 and 110 before. The total level of the students taking the courses also didn't impress one, because this depended on



survey courses, and you could affect this radically by changing the nature of a survey course or persuading a Seymour Slive to give a survey course. This would immensely change your number.

SMITH: Let's say the undergraduate students, did you notice any changes in their writing abilities, in the kinds of papers that they were submitting?

COOLIDGE: One doesn't remember accurately enough. The general level of writing was always bad, always less than what I'd hoped from people who were as carefully selected as undergraduates were. I suspect it got worse, but the really bad ones were exceptional, and one always tended to remember that you'd also, five years ago, had an exceptional one who was really bad. I couldn't say that I could see this, no. I think that was the direction. It certainly didn't improve.

SMITH: In terms of the graduate students from 1950 to 1970, did you notice any changes in the kinds of questions they were bringing and the approaches they were interested in? Were there kinds of intellectual shifts that were taking place amongst your graduate students?

COOLIDGE: Oh, yes. On the whole a diminishment in connoisseurship and an increase in background factors, the iconographic or sociological, which didn't mean that the other did not exist. Both approaches were not un-



precedented, nor did they disappear. The change in the weight of things took place. I think I would have attributed that to the individuals teaching it who changed, so that I didn't tend to think of this as an undergraduate phenomenon. I tended to think, "This reflects Kitzi-nger's arrival here, or so and so's retirement, and one can't see a general change within the field that is, to an extent, reflected in the undergraduates." This comes out most vividly if you look at the articles that are published in periodicals which change in character.

Also, one thing that prevented one thinking in these terms was we never got the best undergraduates. It's very easy to think that, "Oh, well, people who want to make money go into law and medicine. They don't take fine arts as a major." I don't know. I am much more apt to think that-- Well, Vassar [College] and Smith did so much better jobs in teaching. They demanded more of their teachers, and the teachers gave them more. I would tend to think that we aren't getting the first-rate ones perhaps because if they go into history or French or something like that, they would get a higher level of teaching than our department tends to get. I'm not saying that's true; I do not know. Fifteen years go by before you have a summa. You ought to do better than that. I think when I was through with the museum world,



I wanted to get back to art history, and more general things like that are brushed aside because they would just take that much time away from history.

SMITH: Okay. Were you involved in terms of graduate students who've completed their work? Did you involve yourself in helping them get jobs?

COOLIDGE: Sure. Well, one was always consulted, and you developed a list of names of people who were either first-rate or better than the job in which they were. And you sit around watching for an alternative so you can write the letter saying, "Hey, don't overlook so-and-so when you're considering this." Yes, oh, definitely. On the other hand, I think I'm less consulted than I was. I'm astonished that I'm still consulted. I would have thought a person my age, they would never be getting letters asking for recommendations, but I do get them.

SMITH: Actually, as you went back into full-time teaching, the universities in general, and Harvard in particular, were rocked by a lot of student protests and a lot of assaults from communities outside the university wanting greater access. How did you respond to that? Did that affect the courses that you were teaching?

COOLIDGE: It just so happened that the buildup to this-- I shifted jobs in '68, and the buildup to this in the sixties I had no firsthand experience of. I was aware of



it, but I had no firsthand experience of it. It just so happened that in '68 I had a full-year sabbatical, and the entire climactic experience here I just wasn't around. I was dependent on letters. Fascinating that the best newspaper account--far better than the Herald-Tribune or any French one--was the Neue Zürcher Zeitung. I read it and was astonished at how good it was. Yes. I was immediately impressed at some of the criticism. And immensely depressed at shocking things that had been going on all along and that I was unaware of. The students taught the faculty about things.

SMITH: What things were you not aware of?

COOLIDGE: Well, we had an ROTC [Reserve Officers Training Corps]. Well, okay, when you want a professor, starting with [James B.] Conant, you move heaven and earth to get the best one, and you work like hell to get the best one. Here we had two full professors who simply were sent by the army and navy, and they taught X courses. I think in almost every case you wouldn't have dreamed to appoint them as Harvard professors. Students didn't like the way they were being taught, and it never crossed our mind to question. When ROTC was abolished, the [Harvard] Corporation [Board of Overseers]-- And this was unanimously approved by the faculty. "Yes, of course, get rid of this." If you could go through the



officer corps and picked out the ones you wanted and they would accept, that would be one thing, which is what you're doing for anyone else in the faculty, but this wasn't the way to do it. It was the corporation, this group of thoughtful seven men, who, in some fashion, through some Harvard publication that the faculty would read, said, "Look, clearly Harvard has some responsibility towards the nation. It's all very well to get rid of ROTC, but how much of a responsibility do we have? Are we meeting it?" And suddenly to realize that that statement was true, and that of course you were doing a certain number of scientific things that somebody had thought up and were benefiting the nation, but that the total of all of these was not necessarily fulfilling your duty, and that there was no way in the Harvard setup of considering what your duty might be. That this was a tremendous weakness in the structure of the university, that an issue like that could come up and not be handled. This was the kind of thing that came out at that level that was, for me at least, humbling.

SMITH: Within the field of art history, the period began a series of critiques that art history was too conservative, too elitist, too Eurocentric. There was a demand for greater African-American participation in the university and in art history, that different ethnic groups had



different perspectives. There was the rise of feminist criticism. How did those manifest themselves as issues in the department?

COOLIDGE: Individually, there was no-- I can't remember. In the first place, in stating that list of things-- We have such a wealth in Asiatic teaching that that absolves us of a very considerable amount of that kind of criticism. I'm not saying it's one hundred percent, but it is more than many places. Well, the department went through an internal evolution which was regrettable.

COOLIDGE: Regrettable?

COOLIDGE: Yes. Kuhn and Deknatel, who were running things-- Deknatel first and Kuhn then for years afterwards. The department met for lunch every Friday, and if there was a little business to do we did it, but it was really a social occasion. It now meets four in the afternoon twice a semester. Kuhn, Sachs, ourselves, and of course [Edward Waldo] Forbes, Deknatel could afford to give cocktail parties. We certainly gave a cocktail party a year for the whole department and professional museum staff, as did the others. That disappeared when you got in people who just didn't have the money. Just in giving the party, they had kids to think about, so forth and so on. So that the human cohesion diminished, and profoundly regrettably. If I were back there, if I



were director of the Fogg, I know what I would do to try and bring some of it back again. So that the thing about those luncheons was that you could occasionally get going on a big subject like this. If you only meet at four o'clock in the afternoon twice a semester, you've got business to do, and you do nothing but business. I don't think these things are thought about except individually, where there was at least a possibility of thinking about them collectively before.

SMITH: What about pressure to hire nonwhite faculty or women faculty?

COOLIDGE: Nonwhite is hopeless, because in all the years I was there, there were only two students who applied. And there is no evidence that there was any greater number. I think we took both and, in the case of one of these, deliberately lowered our standards. Not shockingly, but, as it were, he got a B. If he'd been white he would have had to get an A-, as it were, to be accepted. Then they graduated. One of them was really quite good, and he was simply murdered in Chicago. Bang. No one figured it out. I think he was coming back from having driven the baby-sitter home and was shot. It would be wonderful, but there were no black teachers of art history that I can think of. You might take one if you could think of one, but I can't think of one.



On women, we've tried for years, and the museum, of course, was largely women. I mentioned about letting the two people in conservation [Richard D. Buck and John Gettens] go. Well, Buck was replaced by a woman [Elizabeth Jones]. Jakob Rosenberg was replaced by his assistant [Ruth Magurn]. That happened because I couldn't find a really good person in prints. Agnes Mongan was there. We had a succession of people after Langdon Warner, including women. It was men and women. So the museum was balancing this, but that was because these people were as good as we could get. I couldn't pick a man I'd rather have than Agnes Mongan in that job. You found women in the museum field in general of first-rate quality. They're up to the men, and in a situation like that we'd do it.

We had great difficulty finding women professors. I think there are two women [Ioli Kalavrezou and Gulru Necipoglu-Kafadar] in addition to the one we've had for some years [Irene Winter], so that this thing is solving itself. But what is not said, and what puzzles me profoundly, is that if you take a group of entering graduate students, if you take the ten best and rate them, six of the ten best will be women and four men--something like that--of your entering graduate students. That's probably because of the quality of Vassar, Smith, and



Wellesley in the teaching of art history, but I don't think it's entirely that. When they graduate, it has dropped to fifty-fifty, and in later life, perhaps way below that. Now, whether it is children, working at home, the feminine way of life, whether it is that the minds don't develop, I don't know. You can't quantify this, but I have the strongest hunch of that fact.

SMITH: What about the ability to rely on support networks? I mean, in terms of faculty recommendations and so forth. Do you think that women have as equal a chance?



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SMITH: Do women have as equal a chance to be considered for promotions or recruitment to the best institutions?

COOLIDGE: Well, speaking locally, they have a better chance because Harvard [University] doesn't have enough women. [laughter] Other things being equal, they'll take the women to change it. I think that there must be many institutions which feel this way. I won't say in the Ivy League it's felt this way, one wouldn't know. Promotion, that doesn't exist, generally speaking. Certainly there would be disciplines in which-- My mathematician father [Julian Lowell Coolidge], with five daughters, declared "There's never been a woman mathematician. You can challenge people and they can't produce a woman mathematician." There just literally is not one, apparently. I wouldn't know. There is certainly discrimination against them getting jobs. Look at the number of men that are employed in women's colleges, where you would expect the pressure would go the other way. I think there is a factor of discrimination here. If I'm right in saying that quality is fifty-fifty, the quality of the employment is not fifty-fifty. In the best jobs. You ask me to give my



opinion of things which I'd much rather be in a group discussing, because it's premature. One doesn't think about this.

But just to complete this: Women are less mobile than men. To be specific, there's one woman that we have here who's marvelous, who came from another institution, a good institution, but really not as good. I don't think that the pay was as good. But she debated very hard before she came here. Partly on basic things like-- She was interested in interdisciplinary things. She'd gotten the interdisciplinary things working there; she wondered whether she could get similar interdisciplinary things here. I just have a feeling that a man would not have had that kind of hesitation. He might not go to Harvard, but he will go to Harvard, [University of California] Berkeley, Stanford [University], Yale [University], if you wish, from the second-rate places and wouldn't think a moment about it. Women do.

SMITH: There were two post-'68 controversies over faculty at Harvard that were the source of a lot of gossip, perhaps, and a lot of public contention in the mid-seventies. I'd like to get your recollections of the events. One is the decision not to give T. J. Clark tenure, which some have claimed was not a response to the level of his scholarship, but a reaction against his



Marxist approach to art history.

COOLIDGE: I was never intimate with Tim. I was a very good friend of his. I never was in his house--he was in mine--but we were very good friends. I admired his Paris book [The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers] very much. I admired his teaching. I find it hard to believe that his replacement will be in the same league. In any case, I wasn't voting at that time. There came a point at which I was too old to vote according to the then regulations. Now they've changed the regulations. Actually, I think I was abroad when this came up. But I think it was a disaster. Mind you, I don't know the range of other scholars, but yes, this was a disaster. Without putting my hand in the fire on that, I'd be very surprised if I could be convinced it was anything but a disaster.

SMITH: Then the second controversy was over Neil Levine and his tenure, which I understand involved a considerable amount of student protest. At first tenure was denied, and that decision was reversed.

COOLIDGE: I am very surprised to hear this.

SMITH: Oh.

COOLIDGE: I know him well. He is an intimate friend. Again, I was not around at the time, but I never heard anything of this sort. No. Be it said, Neil is not a



writer, and he never will write much. I can remember hearing from a colleague at that time when it was being debated that they were considering him and somebody else, and they didn't say-- "Between the two of them, X is going to be a more productive scholar than Neil would be." With that statement, I would agree. Neil is not going to produce very much in print. I think there could have been protest, but I [find it] very hard to believe that it was turned down and then that had to be revised. But being a friend of his, I've always had the impression people I've talked to also believed in him. My crowd believed in him. That some of us didn't, I just was unaware.

SMITH: In a sense I'm just reporting what I've been picking up in my background research, and that's not always necessarily accurate. I think perhaps the more fundamental issue is that both the Clark and the Levine cases were considered important to the whole connoisseur tradition at Harvard, that both of them were at odds with the connoisseur tradition, or at the very least represented a turn away from the connoisseur tradition.

COOLIDGE: This is certainly true of Neil, or it's arguably true of Neil. Again, architectural historians can't have a connoisseur tradition, in a sense. As far as it was said of Clark, it is fundamentally untrue. No



teacher that I have known made more active use of the Fogg [Art Museum] collections than Tim Clark did. To an aggressive degree. We had a loan exhibition of bozzetti, which are terracottas. A big one, and it filled the court and some neighboring galleries. I happened to hang it, though I was retired by then. One did one's best. It was good stuff, but pretty uniform character. Against the back wall, against the cloister wall on the left-hand side, was hung the Jackson Pollock. That was because they couldn't find another place to hang it, for whatever reason, upstairs. Tim had students who were writing papers about it, and he insisted that this outlandishly out-of-place thing had to be hung somewhere. And that was the only place it could hang. He was that kind of person. There was a big Pissarro show in Boston, and he had his students put on a show of Fogg Pissarros. There weren't drawings over there, but prints of drawings here, and his seminar was based on the two shows. This kind of thing. That was Tim the teacher.

Tim is not a [Bernard] Berenson of French painting. He's not a connoisseur in that way or as Paul J. Sachs was. But he believes the study of art is the study of originals and rubs the students' noses in it, as some professors, notably Oleg [Grabar], didn't particularly. Because he writes a Marxian, if you wish-- I didn't find



it all that Marxian, I may say, as a book. But a social interpretation of painting. It's terribly easy for people who have a narrowly connoisseur point of view, who only deal with early Monet as against middle Monet, to assume that he is Marxist and therefore doesn't look at works of art. That is crap. Here I do know what I'm talking about.

SMITH: Actually, I'm coming pretty much to the end of the questions I wanted to ask you, but I do have a couple of technical things. One is the degree to which you might have been consulted or involved in discussions leading to the formation of the National Endowment for the Humanities, or the National Endowment for the Arts.

COOLIDGE: I can't remember any connection to that. It's possible that I was in it, but it didn't amount to anything.

SMITH: So your opinion, either as an academic or as a museum director, was not solicited?

COOLIDGE: Not that I can remember, no.

SMITH: Okay. Have you been involved in the development of any of the programs since those two endowments were established?

COOLIDGE: No.

SMITH: Not even in relationship to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts?



COOLIDGE: Well, when I was president [of the board of trustees] there, I talked to the National Endowment about this, because I had ideas about making the Boston Museum more national. They sent the director who was the head of one of those two. I can't remember. I think it was the Arts. No, it wasn't the Arts. It must have been the Humanities. He was entirely sympathetic with the suggestions that I made, but I was a trustee. I couldn't sell them to the staff. I didn't try very hard, because I don't think tenured trustees should try very hard, but if you bring the thing up and nobody shows the interest, well, that's that. The kind of thing I had in mind, the Fogg couldn't have done very effectively. It was the sheer size of the collections and the extent of size in the collections that could have been used, it seemed to me, there.

SMITH: My other question relates to your involvement as an architectural historian in the deliberative processes of Harvard University over the selection of architects. For instance, did you have any involvement with the selection of Corbu [Le Corbusier] to do the Carpenter Center [for Visual Arts]?

COOLIDGE: Well, I don't know, and I'm not sure that anybody knows the full story of the selection. I tend to disbelieve anything. The ones I've heard don't jibe with

what facts I know. I was consulted. Actually, a very senior architect--an overseer--consulted me about this, asked me about this, and I was all for it. So I was consulted. I was also on the committee which didn't select, but which wrote the program for the building.

SMITH: The Carpenter Center is next to the Fogg, so the programs overlap, don't they?

COOLIDGE: The Carpenter Center represents an activity that had taken place in the Fogg. The Fogg has grown in part by divesting itself of activities, narrowing its range, and I'm happy about that. We couldn't get anywhere with teaching the practice of art. I'm not sure that it's the most remarkable institution at Harvard, but it's better than we were doing. I was on the committee that said, "You must have a new building." One knew that the university agreed in principle. Then the committee wrote the program. What actually happened next I don't know, but somebody who was a weighty Harvard figure and a weighty Boston figure, and he was very senior architect, got hold of me and said, "Le Corbusier is one of the names being considered. How would you feel about it?" I was astonished that that was the case. I said, "splendid."

SMITH: What about, for instance, with something like the science center building, which I think is the [Josep Lúis] Sert building?



COOLIDGE: Not then. The only other instance, and the only instance in which they had a different approach, was the Sackler Museum. I was deeply involved in that. Nobody really knows who selects Harvard architects or why. And that's to say that individual cases are enormously different.

SMITH: I have another technical question. The textbooks that have been used in art history during the time that you were teaching, did you have preferences? Did you use textbooks, for instance, in your survey class? I think you taught that prior to the [H. W.] Janson [History of Art] being published, but did you choose another book that was available at the time?

COOLIDGE: I don't remember. Janson came along. It seemed to me so much better than I expected that that's what I would have used. I tended to be anti-textbook. I'm probably wrong. I mean, if I was doing that now and had colleagues or section people, they might talk me into using Janson, or something like that. I like Janson a lot better than all the Englishmen-- Sir Ernest Gombrich's-- Well, no matter. I think Janson is a very good book.

SMITH: Well, I have run through my prepared topic outline. Do you have anything you'd like to add at this point?



COOLIDGE: Probably. I'm not sure that I was adequate on Agnes Mongan. I mean, I talked about Agnes and human relations. She's a marvelous teacher. She's never, that I know of, given lectures, but she inspires students. It's curious. She's rarely in doubt about works of art, but she can get students to work at that as if she were in doubt about it. She's the supremely object-minded person.

As an administrator, she's very good, a little prone to keep assistants. I had to make a principle that the museum would have an up-or-out policy, and this went very much against the grain with her. But that was because I was stuck alone with the good people, with some secondary people who had been there twenty years, and you just couldn't function. So I made a principle that, depending on age, after five years or three years or whatever. This was something she didn't understand, and she said, "The old people know the collections." Well, you learn the collections. The museum world is so behind in its handling of personnel that way. There's no promotion. You can be an assistant curator until the age of sixty-five and an international authority. The institution has not given you the authority which you should have had.

She does absolutely superlative work on anything she puts her hand to, writing or exhibit. Not particularly



original in the ideas for things that she has. Very good cataloger, in this sense, that she'll catalog the Fogg collection. Which needs to be done, and this is fine. But a wonderful person to work with.



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